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No. 975

SUMMER, 1948

MAGAZINE

EDITED BY PETER QUENNEL

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JOHN MURRAY, 50 ALBEMARLE STREET, LONDON, W.1

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The Destruction of a Demi-God

Manuel Rodríguez 'Manolete'

BY JOHN MARKS

The arena was empty ; there was no one to acknowledge the prolonged frenzy of our applause. The dead beast, the wounded man, and his scurrying retinue had vanished. Encircled by the cheering crowd, only that wide, round pool of sand remained, in sunlight and shadow, like a miniature desert within the city : a strange sight and symbolic, little though we realised its significance at the time. It was July 16 of last year, towards the end of the big annual *corrida* in aid of the Madrid Provincial Hospital. Manolete, the famous matador who was the favourite, worshipped, resented, and maligned by fickle multitudes, had been gored painfully below the left knee ; but he refused to retire hurt until his second bull, the fifth that afternoon, had fallen to a single straight thrust of the sword between its shoulders.

Once again the invincible idol, his prowess demonstrated, had been carried out in triumph—to the infirmary. Honour was satisfied. The sixth bull entered the ring ; the fight went on. But the climax, the catastrophe, had passed, draining all subsequent emotion from the scene.

Nobody then among the shaken spectators could guess that this surmounted accident was the rehearsal for Manolete's death in similar circumstances six weeks later. In less than half that time he recovered, or so it seemed, for on August 4 he returned to the fray. The wound was scarcely healed—but throughout the thirteen years of his career in the bullring Manolete was never daunted by the odds which he faced disdainfully and conquered without a smile. The doctors advised him to spare himself and, because of his weakened state, to avoid unnecessary risks. Their counsel was more suitable for an exhausted millionaire than for a professional bullfighter. Manuel Rodríguez, known as Manolete, was both. At the age of thirty he was supposed to have put away a million pesetas at the bank for each year of his life. With the natural glibness of Spanish rumour such figures were exaggerated. Money interested him ; but Manolete had earned his huge fortune the hard way—perhaps the hardest way of all, easy as he might make

it appear to some of his more captious critics in the comfortable safety of ringside seats.

In Madrid that day, as the main attraction for charity, he had performed free of charge. His normal fee was the equivalent of slightly less than £5,000 a fight. The bull that caught him picked his pocket of a large sum, for he missed several engagements as a result of the mishap. He blamed no one but himself, although a moment before the wound was inflicted somebody had yelled a taunt which angered and, for once, distracted the man while he was alone in the open with the bull. Every *torero* is accustomed to hear isolated insults from the crowd. Manolete saw to it always that they were followed, at the first opportunity, by a roar of unanimous acclamation.

By last summer, after his deliberate absence of many months from Spanish bullrings, the hostile shouts had become more frequent and more savage. Outwardly imperturbable, unbending and aloof, Manolete confessed to intimate friends that the growing animosity of his public detractors worried and distressed him. He, the conscientious artist, had not changed, except in a constant effort to improve his personal style to the utmost. The pundits who deny the value of that style, dismissing it as novel, no doubt, and uncanny to watch, but strictly negative, may claim that Manolete's lofty persistence along the same rigid lines was the projection of a basic technical fault. For some onlookers in the envious general mass, who thought that they could see through his queer new mastery of an ancient craft, the hermetic intensity of his inspiration had begun at last to pall. The popular hero was not only risking life and limb, like any lesser exponent of the game; he was fighting grimly now to maintain a reputation as yet unsullied but increasingly precarious.

Hay en Córdoba un torero
que se llama Manolete . . .
El que se meta con él
no sabe con quién se mete.

At this crucial juncture no bull was going to keep Manolete idle against his will. 'There's a bullfighter in Cordova by the name of Manolete; whoever interferes with him has no idea whom he's up against.' As usual the current folk ditty was neat as a nutshell; it epitomised laconically the grave integrity of Seneca's fellow-townsmen and the uncompromising haughtiness of a modern Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance. Cordova vies seriously with the romantic school of Seville as one of the mainsprings of

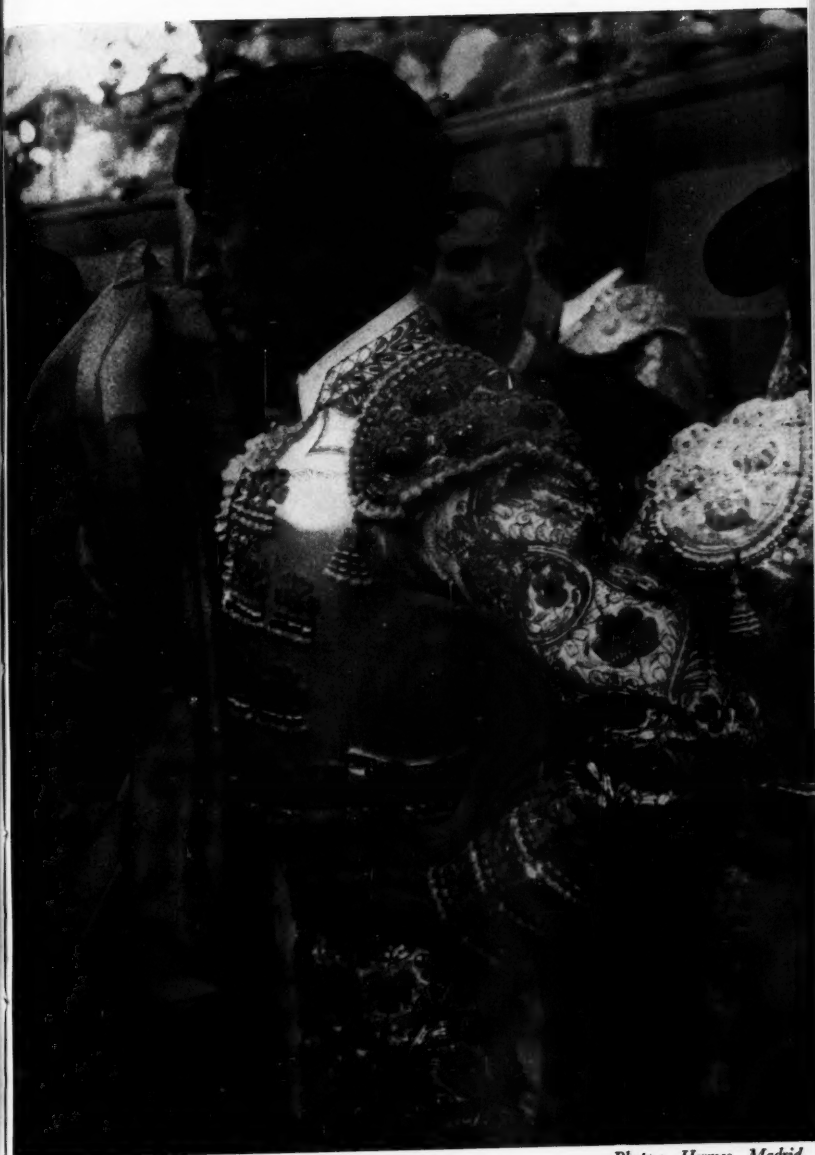


Photo : Hermes, Madrid.

MANOLETE.

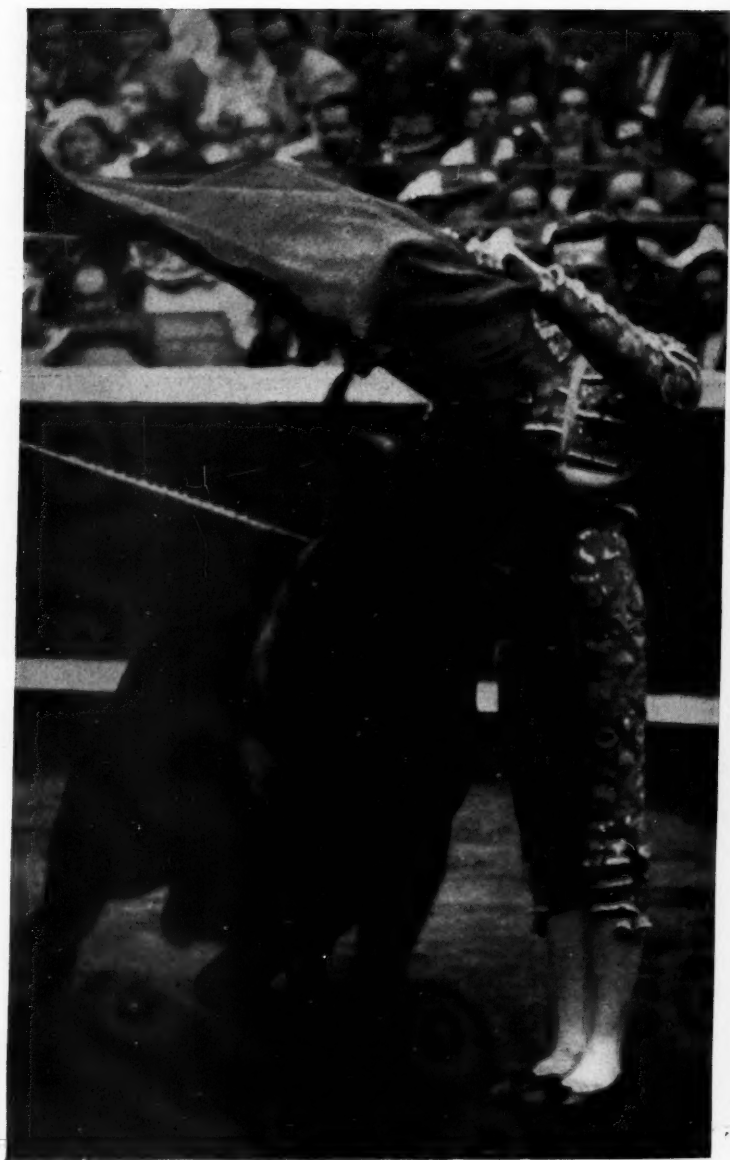


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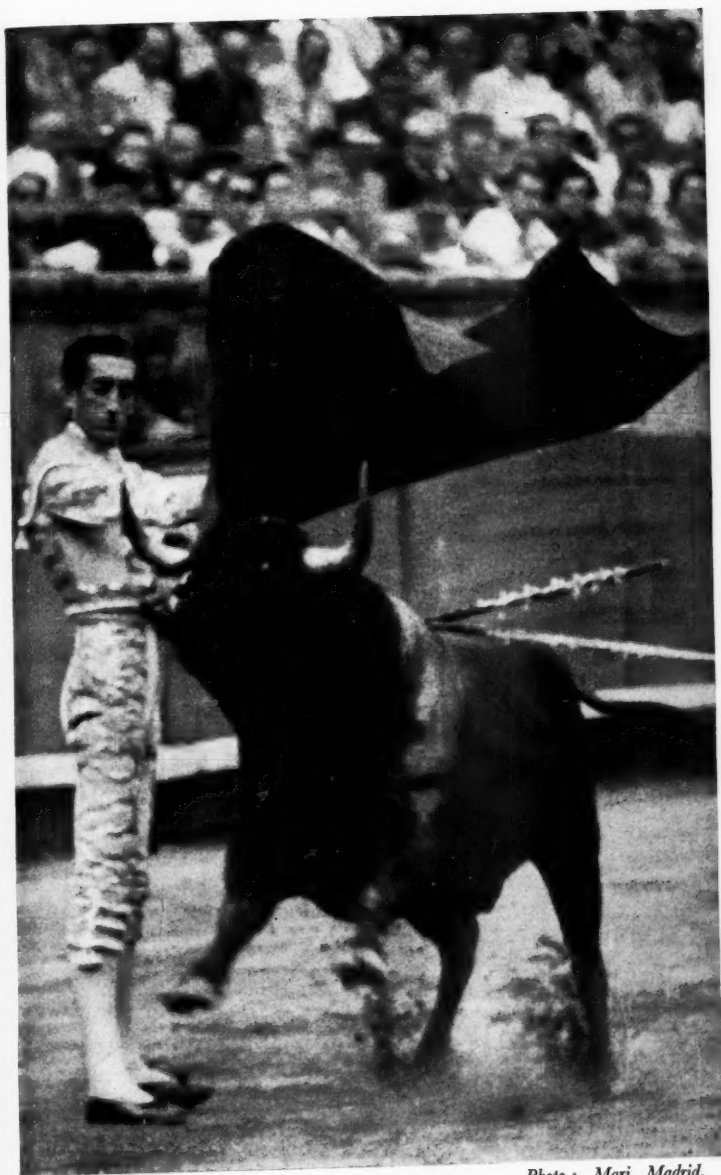


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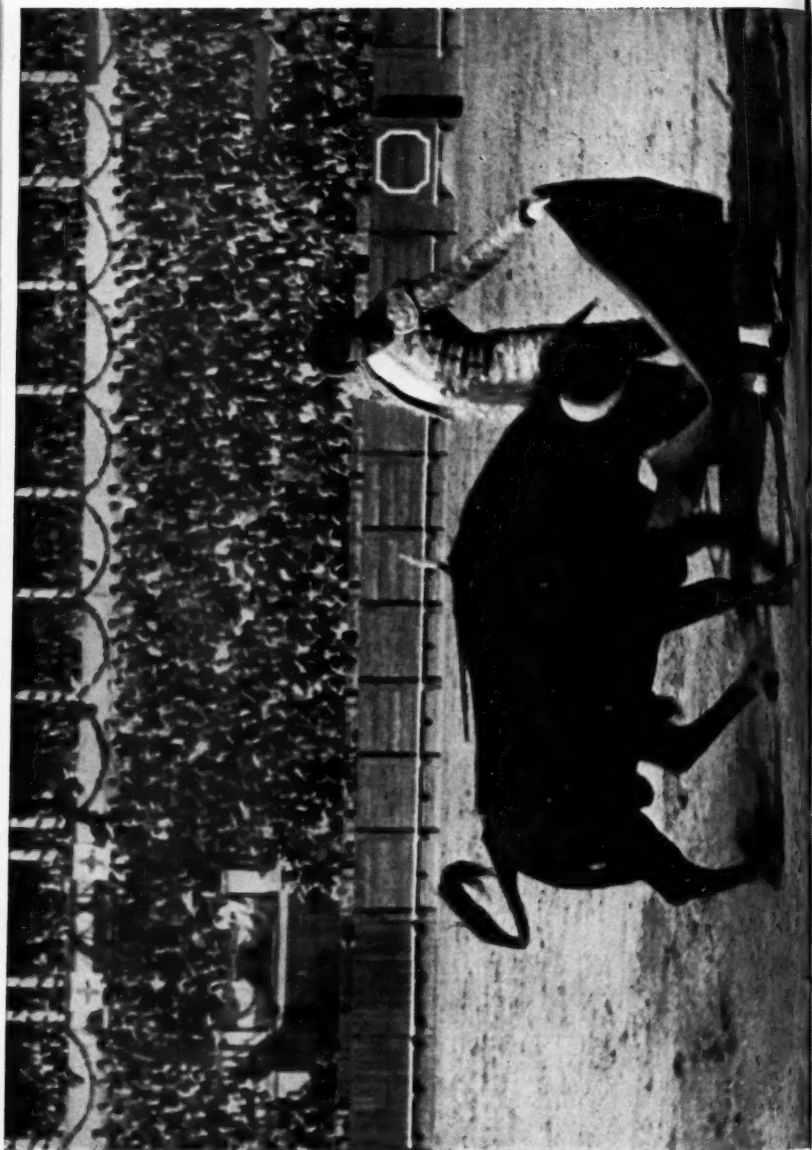


Photo : Hermes, Madrid.

the taumachian tradition. Her new champion scorned all trivial vanity, but he was immensely proud. The challenge of at least one young rival who presumed to threaten his privileged position had to be met; the vulgar conspiracy against him, on account of his enormous influence, must be defied and overcome. When the great Belmonte, in retirement, was asked by a reporter to name the best bullfighter of the present day he declared: 'The best is the one they pay the most.' Manolete knew what his art was worth. He would silence incipient criticism, because he was 'the best of bullfighters,' on whom every audience could rely to give invariably his best. There was good reason why they paid fantastic prices to see him do in the arena what no one before him had done.

Whatever may have been the covetous plans hatched by his manager on his behalf, obviously Manolete had no need to amass another seven or eight millions during the remainder of the Spanish season. If the stupid squabble with the Mexican bullfighters were settled, he would head for Mexico again in the winter with his team, as cricketers go on tour to Australia. Otherwise he would be welcome in Venezuela, Colombia, or Peru. After that he had decided to retire. On September 1 he was due to take possession of the estates in his native Andalusia which he had bought for 14,000,000 pesetas. True to type, his ambition was to live out the rest of his days in the sun-enthralled southern landscape—and to breed bulls for combat. At the height of his fame, still young, but ten times richer than any great matador of the past, Manolete the Monster, as his awed admirers called him, was about to abandon the exertions and excitements of the ring. But first he owed it to himself, and to friends and foes alike, to crown an already legendary record of success by a series of final victories over the bull, the upstart competition, and the still enslaved yet churlish and insatiable mob that longed without avail to shake the pedestal of his supremacy.

Limping back into the lists, he made ten further public appearances—with unequal results—before encountering, at Linares, the murderous Miura bull which killed him in his prime. The name Miura has a fateful sound to the ear of the *aficionado*. This particular breed, with its characteristic long neck, its probing horns, and vicious temper, is responsible in taurine annals for eight killings, including that of Manolete's great-uncle, Pepete, in 1862, and although now incomparably less difficult and dangerous than of old, it still provides a recognised test of courage as the byword, in bull-fighting parlance, for unpredictable hazards and well-founded fear.

It was a black bull, by name Islero, which slew Manolete. A

stock superstition has it that no fifth bull is bad. Now perhaps that foolish tag will die out, too. Islero, like the bull which caught the Monster as a warning in Madrid the month before, was the fifth to appear on that blazing August afternoon at Linares. It showed treacherous cowardice and cunning from the start, and Manolete would have been amply justified in tackling it with caution. Professional pride—pricked maybe by the presence of his most self-assertive rival—cast any idea of eluding danger from Manolete's mind. His prestige and his wealth had not been won on the defensive, but by dint of an unflinching efficiency which enabled him to force the most fractious or sluggish beasts to follow the elegant, solemn motions of a dance to his own design. For the thousandth time the man imposed his superior will upon a powerful adversary, transforming the brute into a partner ready to be sacrificed. His dominion over the bull was complete. The regular miracle had been achieved. But he aimed too directly, too cleanly, as he lunged forward to the kill. Precisely as the steel sank to the hilt in the muscular hump of the bull's neck, the horn slashed across at the man's right thigh and ripped into his flesh.

Some who witnessed the *cogida* claim that they realised immediately that Manolete was doomed. If their instinct was correct, one can only deplore but must nevertheless excuse the failure of the local doctors' ten-hour struggle to save his life. It is hard, however, to forgive the needless suffering which a false start towards the infirmary entailed, or the fact that no clean glass could be found there, and that an ordinary bullfight cape had to serve the wounded man, in lieu of extra blankets, for covering. Sordid details of this kind abound in the reports of the garish scene, cluttered with inquisitive bystanders, which startled the whole of Spain next morning when the protagonist of the drama had bled to death, shortly before dawn. The saphenous vein had been severed, and there seems to be no doubt that the femoral vein also was cut, although this injury is not mentioned in the first medical report. The gash was eight inches long. Four blood-transfusions were administered, and plasma was prepared for a fifth. But it was too late. So were the specialists in this peculiar form of surgery who raced more than 200 miles that night to the dying man's bedside. They were met half-way, travelling at top speed, by Manolete's friend and comrade in arms, the gypsy Rafael Vega, whose brother, the first Gitanillo de Triana, was so unlucky as to die by degrees of ghastly wounds received from a bull. When Dr. Giménez Guinea examined Manolete's torn thigh he saw at once that there was no hope left.

A first thought of moving the casualty to his home town had been given up when, despite all efforts, the internal bleeding continued. Instead he was carried jolting on a stretcher to the modern hospital on the outskirts of Linares itself. Linares is a tin-mining centre in the province of Jaén. It was to this same hospital that, five years previously, the matador had brought a little girl who was knocked down by his car. She was unhurt, and the next afternoon he dedicated the death of a bull to her. But the building had impressed Manolete so favourably that he remarked: 'It almost would be worth falling ill here to be cured in this place.' Reserved and taciturn, as befitted a fatalistic Cordovese of his stoical temperament, Manolete was inclined to give a twist of irony to his view of things. On the operating table he asked: 'Did I kill the bull?' and learned that he had been awarded the trophy of both its ears and tail. These bloody tokens, and not his farms, his fortune, and a life of leisure, were the sole amends that the Spanish populace could make at the last for their aggressive demands on his unerring skill and unstinted valour. Belatedly the gallery found that the price which their greed had exacted from him was far higher than the sums which they had grudged paying—but had consented to pay, time and again—for the joy of watching his splendid performance of a cruel pastime in which men stake their lives for the gain and glory to be got by affording others the keenest visual pleasure.

One loyal friend of Manolete, a priest, died of shock when he read the news of a death which, like Joselito's, sent an entire nation into flabbergasted mourning and struck all bullfight fans throughout the Peninsula, southern France, and parts of Latin America as appalling and incredible. English readers may wonder why the Spaniards should deem it odd or important that a gladiator who accepts fabulous amounts for running evident risks may chance to undergo the penalty of being maimed or killed. The bull is always slaughtered. It cannot choose or escape its end—which is to supply butcher's meat. The fox is free to run for its life. The bull must stand and fight to the finish. Other hunted beasts can resort, in their natural state, to retreat or attack, although the odds are heavily weighted against them in either case. But the *toro bravo* is big game that has been specially and carefully bred to take the offensive. Bullfighting is not a sport, but an art; it is a dangerous ritual, not a spirited contest. Intelligence is pitted against brute strength, form controls fury, by clearly defined methods. There can be no question of varying the proper handicaps on either side. For the human part mortal peril is

the essence of a beautiful and barbarous spectacle which pleads no other moral justification than that it frequently produces an exhibition of rare grace and daring for the aesthetic entertainment of the masses. Fair play is observed only in so far as the show is governed by strict rules which were devised to allow the enemy certain limited advantages while securing the man's probable immunity from harm. If the *torero* is caught by the bull, just as when a steeplechase rider is thrown, a lamentable accident has occurred. He suffers the fortuitous consequences of an admitted adventure, which are not for that reason any the less unforeseen and disastrous.

The fate of Manolete horrified millions of *aficionados*, as well as Spaniards indifferent or opposed to the bullfight, because his talent was unique and his stature in the public eye unparalleled. It was in the phenomenal sense that a critic dubbed him the Monster, and the nickname stuck, for in his own sphere he had attained to an eminence which baffled comparison. The extreme diminutive of Manuel—Manolo, Manolito, Manolillo, Manolete—had become a household word, a talisman of success, a touchstone of outstanding personality. The sensational tidings of his sudden death spread like wildfire. The people's grief was frantic and sincere, but many unctuous manifestations of bereavement and remorse were added to the national wake for the fallen giant. A souvenir-hunter made off with Islero's horns. Portraits and effigies of Manolete, each more hideous than the last, were showered upon the market. Photographers, biographers, and manufacturers made handsome profits. Every private and public aspect of his existence was brought to light, as gossip batten on a lugubrious topic that will never be laid to rest. Various scapegoats were promptly discovered. Attention was drawn again to the inadequate medical equipment of Spanish provincial bullrings, although most of the blame was attributed to the doctors themselves, who were suspected of bungling in sheer misery when confronted with so distinguished a patient.

Looking back, it seems now a fitting and inevitable tragedy that Manolete should succumb, at the peak of his glory, fighting, on the very eve of retirement, for the sake of all that he had ever wanted to be. Luck plays a negligible part in the story of such a hard ascent from the direst poverty to the dizziest pinnacle of fame. Manolete was born of a bullfighting dynasty. Both branches of his family—Rodríguez y Sánchez—had produced numerous performers of varying merit but only modest success in the ring. His father, the first matador and the second of his

relatives to use the pseudonym, died when the thin and ailing boy was five years old. There were two sisters, and three daughters by his mother's previous marriage to another bullfighter, Lagartijo Chico. The widow and her brood suffered desperate want. Although these humble folk were connected closely or distantly with the whole taurine fraternity of Cordova, little Manuel found no inducement in his early life at home, among the women, to seek the same hard and anxious means of existence. His undernourished physique was against him. How the ambition to become a bullfighter eventually dawned in the child's mind is not apparent from the sparse details which he confided to friends at a later date. The anecdotes concerning his first few escapades, with other eager urchins, are remarkably dull when compared with the signs of an overwhelming vocation that were revealed, for example, by the dramatic initial stumblings of the young Belmonte. Every year scores of ragged Spanish boys set out on a journey which ends for most of them in disenchantment long before they can hire their first *traje de luces*, the desirable costume known in the jargon as the 'sparkling suit.' Manolete donned his in France. He had joined an itinerant troupe of beginners, with whom he experienced the normal course of hunger, injury, humiliation, and fright. Gradually in this harsh school the glum, gaunt, silent youth who begged for an engagement on any terms—'even if I can only have a couple of sardines'—grew into the awkward novice who lacked the simplest rudiments of grace but could kill a bull in the purely classic manner. The latent power was there, and the will to win turned this unpromising figure into the melancholy Monster with the far-away look, the impassive air, and a magical spell over the horned beast and the human herd. He lived to take part in 552 *corridos*, killing more than 1000 bulls, and at least half that number yielded him delirious, resounding triumphs.

By a curious coincidence the Spaniards' favourite *fiesta* underwent an intense reformation at the start of both world wars. In 1914, when Juan Belmonte's brave new style was attracting bigger crowds than had ever thronged to the *plaza de toros*, Guerrita, the veteran Caliph of Cordova, advised all inquiring fans, if they wished to see Belmonte fight, to do so at once. But Belmonte, battered and scarred, still lives. He himself has referred sadly to his blunder in missing the martyr's crown which ought by rights to have topped his magnificent career. It was his faultless companion Joselito, the most naturally gifted of bullfighters, who died in the infirmary of a dusty provincial town. The plain fact that

at any time tauromachy is a risky business was proved again last year, thrice over, by the deaths—similar to Manolete's—of the *peón* Cerrajillas in Spain, the Mexican matador Carnicerito in Portugal, and the *novillero* Joselillo in Mexico.

The Monster, too, had been thought invulnerable. Tall and slim, with a long white streak in his black hair and a scar down his chin from the corner of set lips, he was a living legend, a totem of flesh and blood. Slightly bow-legged, sombre, ungainly when not sculptured in static contrast to the charging bull, there was a sublime assurance in the infinitely slow, smooth movements of his silken cape. Such perfection in the rigid stance, the languid gesture, was criticised by purists as a simplification to the point of decadence. They inveighed against it as an art of dazzling counterfeits. He was denounced for narrowing the scope of a time-honoured technique. He was accused of demanding smaller, feebler bulls for the practice of his arrogant control over them, and of driving the cost of admittance to extravagant heights. Yet these same charges were levelled in their day against the rare innovators who preceded him in the development of modern bullfighting from a battle to a ballet. Nobody denies that the general artistic standard of the bullfight has been raised beyond recognition since those good and gone old days when bulls were bulls and the gruff fellows who faced them were stalwarts almost as brawny and bewhiskered as the beasts of Bashan. Nor does any wise *aficionado* doubt that Manolete modified Byron's 'ungentle sport' as drastically, if not so conclusively perhaps, as did Belmonte—John the Earthquake—before the Monster was born.

The question is whether Manolete's contribution is actually a dead-end. Did he revolutionise the technique of *el toreo* as an art, like Belmonte, who in Joselito's puzzled phrase 'invented' it some thirty years ago, or has he merely produced a profound but passing effect on the *fiesta* as a business? It is too soon to tell.

Esta es la fiesta española,
que viene de prole en prole,
y ni el gobierno la abola,
ni habrá nadie que la abole.

If bullfighting is never abolished from the earth, for as long as the game endures the present epoch will be remembered as the era of Manolete. Other contemporary *toreros*, of excellent or even exquisite quality, may still give the public what it expects: from Ortega a masterful *reductio ad absurdum*; from Manolete's disciple, Parrita, an accurate, worthy replica of his style; a flickering, vivid gaiety from the star and the bright satellites of the Sevillian school;

from Dominguín a strained, synthetic facility of indisputable competence ; pure notes of classical harmony from Gitanillo's erratic inspiration ; and the prodigious impish virtuosity of the adolescent Paquito Muñoz. But the gap will not be filled until a newcomer arrives to claim the topmost rank, who can show a compelling individual talent coupled with an equal and absolute proficiency in handling the cloak, the *muleta*, and the sword. To inherit the leadership he must be the genuine *fenómeno* who sets the personal seal of a fresh interpretation on the established canons, which require him to trick the bull neatly, to tame it thoroughly, and to kill it honestly. The combination of these gifts is disappointingly scarce to-day, when few matadors live up to the true meaning of the title.

It was just such a minor genius, however, who retired suddenly in Mexico City last February. Carlos Arruza's reckless athletic ability, applied to bullfighting, was so notably the flamboyant opposite of Manolete's statuesque calm that, in the ring together, their antithetical styles were regarded as complementary. They were indeed comparable only at a single point of contact, which the Mexican had copied from Manolete—that same foreshortened approach to the animal, which is the chief bone of contention between the modern fancy and the *laudatores temporis acti*.

Arruza intends to take part in one more *corrida*, which is being organised in Spain with the object of collecting funds for the proposed monument to Manolete. This is to be positively his last appearance, and he is reported to have vouchsafed the opinion that probably in future budding bullfighters will be allowed to relax their efforts, withdrawing to a more discreet distance from the danger of the horns. He believes that the exorbitant price of tickets may therefore be reduced. So conceited a comment is distinctly less engaging than Guerrita's terse verdict on his succession : ' After me, nobody—and after nobody, Fuentes.' Moreover, as a valedictory pronouncement, it is sheer nonsense. The mark which the pair of them left on their profession is primarily Manolete's. With time it will certainly be altered. Most likely it will be outdone. But if it was a forward step in the evolution of the *fiesta*, without doubt it must leave an indelible footprint. The bull is the deciding factor—not so much by its weight and size, which decreased in the three lean years of drought, as by the measure of its shrewd combative instinct, which sharpens with the fullness of age. Rodolfo Gaona, the first of the Mexicans, prophesied recently that when bulls are again what they were the new-fangled norm will give way to the hard and fast principles which

he and his contemporaries obeyed in competition with Joselito and Belmonte. Yet the chance of such a development seems remote. If it were to happen it would mean that Manolete was a freak and his accomplishment largely a fraud.

But the bulk of the *afición* felt quite differently on the subject. They idolised Manolete, and they wanted something more from him—even more than he could give. They insisted that he should surpass himself in defence, against all comers, of a Manolete myth which they, of their own volition, had created in his image. His generous self-esteem, his *pundonor*, led him to an ultimate test, for he was what he was, and they had made him. There could only be one outcome. Those large, sad, steady eyes held a presentiment, which was bound to be fulfilled, as eventually it was, in the slaying of a bull—which the Spaniards term 'the moment of truth'—on the dark and dazzling sands of the amphitheatre at Linares.

Mr. Hallam

BY BETTY MILLER

From my bedroom window I could see Lucius, who had gone to meet the visitors, walking with them in the park. They were coming along the path that led towards the canal. When they reached the bridge they stopped, as I knew they would do, and leaned for a moment on the iron parapet, looking down at the slow-flowing waters beneath. The canal at this point exerted a visible compulsion upon its environment : at all hours of the day, men and women and children hung fascinated above it : the poplar trees that lined its sloping banks yearly dipped their branches lower and yet lower, so that it seemed as if the canal, not content with having stolen from them the secret of their reflection, was now about to pull them in bodily after it. In the same way, the scene stole from me my own powers of concentration : evening after evening I would sit staring out of the window in a vacancy so profound that if anyone came into the room and spoke to me, I could only gaze at them with the detachment of a sleepwalker, unable to find the simplest word with which to give account of my condition.

Lucius came across the road ; stepping delicately beside his visitors ; directing them, with deference but with no visible anxiety, to the house. I saw Mr. Hallam pause at the gate. Before entering, standing in the wake of Lucius and of his wife, he laid a hand for a moment on the low iron scrollwork : his eyes, in surmise (so this was the home the boy came from) swept the high stucco front of the house. Too late to retreat : his glance clashed with mine, startling us both. Guiltily, he lowered his head and followed Lucius over the groggy crazy-paving : he disappeared with an air of docility under the frosted-glass hood of the porch.

I sat down slowly on the end of my bed. All was changed in my estimate of the afternoon. Who would have suspected that the legendary Mr. Hallam (a character whose mannerisms, on the playing-field as at the blackboard, were cruelly familiar to every member of the household) would present himself on our

doorstep in the guise of a fair-haired and elegant young man? Unaccountably disturbed, I got up from the bed. I went over to the dressing-table and looked intently at it, seeing myself, in the hoop of the mirror, sallow, in a gym tunic, with an overgrown fringe that had the air, I recognised it myself, of a listless and insalubrious weed. I would change, I decided, into my new green afternoon dress. Earlier, Lucius had begged me to do precisely this, and I had refused: as I felt myself constrained to refuse so much to him; to yield nothing to the long enmity that from the nursery onwards had joined us one to the other in tense and ruthless intimacy.

Downstairs, a door slammed. I pictured to myself a white-capped Bridget, crackling with starch and Sinn Fein resentment, leading the visitors up to the drawing-room; a big double room on the first floor. A moment later Lucius bounded up the stairs two at a time, and rattled the handle of my door, which I had locked. 'Hurry up; they're here!' I opened the door: he stood on the landing in his black jacket, a white starched collar, ink-thumbed, encircling the thin boyish neck. His dark eyes gleamed at me under bristling lashes. 'They're here,' he said again. He was summoning my assistance, doubtful, in view of the taboos involved, of my mother's social capacity, or of her judgment. 'Come down now, can't you?'

'All in good time.'

'Another thing.' He leant towards me urgently. 'Call me Luke,' he said, 'not Lucius. Remember—not Lucius—not in front of them.'

This gave me an advantage I had not looked for. Too rare to neglect. 'It was you,' I said gently, 'who took the pump off my bicycle. Wasn't it?'

A barely perceptible hesitation. 'Yes,' he said: driven to it.

'Do I get it back, then?'

'All right.' He looked frankly at me. 'As soon as they've gone.'

I locked the door. Alone again, I changed into lime-green velvet: I fastened to my left wrist the coral bracelet, a gift of my mother's, that hitherto I had refused to wear; and I stood brush in hand at the dressing-table, trying without success to groom the uneven ends of my fringe. Normally, the apathy, the rankness of growth of that fringe pleased me, as a visible defiance of the conventions that hemmed me about: now, suddenly, I desired to be different: I would have liked to sweep aside the

ambiguous fronds, to reveal, prematurely perhaps, but in all confidence, the serenity of a brow boldly and lucidly naked.

My mother's drawing-room had three long windows that overlooked the park. It was a pretty room, with one of those frail hooded balconies of the period, fluted, as is the flower of a bluebell. Since the room with its adornments celebrated, to the exclusion of comfort or mere utility, a grace that I could not aspire to, it provoked in me an unvarying resentment that caused me to sit lumpishly upon the extreme edge of its delicate chairs; to recoil as rigidly from the caress of its striped satin cushions as I might from some furtive attempt to win me over by conciliation. Lucius, on the other hand, instinctively appreciative, seemed at ease in this setting, snuffing up with the pleasure of a lap-dog the mingled odours of spiced cake and of cut flowers that haunted the lamp-lit twilight that it was my mother's pleasure, at this time of the year, to create about her at the hour of tea.

'This is my daughter: this is Lucius' sister,' said my mother. Thus presented, I shook hands with a tall angular woman, and then with the Latin master himself, who rose from the corner of the hearth to greet me. 'How do you do,' he said. He looked quickly, assessingly at me; in search, so it seemed to me, not of my own identity, but of some reflection of Lucius, whose presence, in such a setting, he might indeed be prepared to resent. Absently, for a moment, he retained my hand in his. I could scarcely bring myself to return his glance. With his gilded hair, his long hollow face, he had a beauty whose impact (at the same moment childhood ended) precipitated indifference into a new and painful awareness. There was a silence, and then, brusquely, I drew my hand from his. I went and sat, apart from the others, on a low stool by the window. Through the cool pane I could hear, echoing faintly across the park, the long exasperated snarl of a captive lion.

Looking neither at Lucius nor at me, her eyes denying, before company, all knowledge of the complicated feud that enlivened our relations back-stairs, Bridget came into the drawing-room, a silver tea-tray clenched between either fist. My mother motioned to Lucius to remove a pile of books from the sofa-table: Mr. Hallam, too, rose to give what assistance might be needed. As he moved, the light from the lamp fell across his face, and I saw to my surprise that he was not, as he had hitherto appeared to me, a very young man. There was scarcely a line or a wrinkle on his long pale face: at the same time, the whole surface had that look, curiously wizened, curiously weathered, that only the years,

or the slow exposure to the climate of disillusionment will bring. He turned his head : he was young again, and elegant : but it seemed to me now (he stood looking down at my mother arranging the teacups on the tray) that in the very lassitude of his gestures might be detected a secret weight—the drag, perhaps, of those submerged and unproductive years.

‘Indian or China tea?’ said my mother. With her draped sleeves, she sat on the couch, silver teapot raised. She had a gentle and submissive face, with beautiful dark eyebrows that Lucius had inherited, but not I. She looked at Mrs. Hallam, in oatmeal tweed, who sat staring brightly and blankly before her under the brim of a brown cloche hat. ‘Indian, please,’ said Mrs. Hallam. Carefully, Lucius bore to her the shallow gilt-rimmed cup : he presented, neatly stacked upon frail doilies, the damp white sandwiches of cucumber or tomato. ‘Oh—thank you!’ Mrs. Hallam said desperately : cup in hand, she made to take a sandwich : at once her bulging lizard-skin handbag rolled from her, and bursting like a bomb, scattered its contents on the floor at her feet. ‘No, don’t—don’t——’ Inexpressibly mortified, she waved off any attempt at assistance : a red-knuckled wrist protruded as she bent down to pluck from the carpet green-grocer’s bills, letters, safety-pins, some round white lozenges and a powder-puff sewn into a yellow chiffon handkerchief. Mrs. Hallam possessed little of her husband’s elegance ; nothing of his composure. A haggard woman, with burning eyes, burning cheeks, she had long uncouth limbs whose impulses she seemed singularly unable to control. The same distraction affected even her clothes : down-trodden court shoes lapsed from her narrow heels ; an obscure shoulder-strap slipped perpetually from her right shoulder ; the placket of her skirt was undone. I looked at her angrily. For some reason, the plight, the pathos of the woman roused in me a strong sense of antagonism. I turned my eyes from her, denying all kinship with unsuccessful womanhood, and stole a glance at Mr. Hallam, where he sat talking in lowered tones to my mother. (‘Such a brilliant boy—so young—so promising’ : my mother was flushed and beaming above the teacups.) Mrs. Hallam sipped spasmodically at her tea : Lucius (the perfect little gentleman) brought to her, with a diffident smile, a plate of buttered scones. ‘Oh—thank you,’ she said again. This time, raising her head, she looked intently at Lucius for a moment. There was something in that glance that I could not understand. The too bright, too blue eyes that rested on the boy’s face had in them a look of humbleness, almost of fear.

A hostess, my mother was conscious all the while of a duty neglected. She tore herself now from the languid felicities of Mr. Hallam, and turned her drooping grey-green eyes upon his wife. 'And have you a family of your own, Mrs. Hallam?—No?—Well, a schoolmaster has a permanent family to bring up, isn't that so——?' Mr. Hallam, meanwhile, looked restlessly about the room. My heart leapt: I thought that he would address himself, at last, to me: acknowledge, tacitly, the silent encounter of our eyes earlier in the afternoon. He turned his head towards the window and looked at me: I smiled back at him. Mr. Hallam did not smile. The hollow eyes slid from mine, the glance dissolved in vagueness, and nothing remained to me of the encounter but bewilderment and a sense of emptiness such as I had never before experienced.

Lucius sat on the piano stool eating a slice of sponge cake. I could see that he was bored. Beneath a smiling demeanour, his attention was elsewhere: his thoughts, as usual, were all upstairs, in the big bare room at the top of the house where, on an old wash-hand stand under the window, he was busy assembling or dismantling the component parts of a cat's-whisker wireless set. He sat swinging backwards and forwards on the revolving stool. Under the lamplight, his black hair gleamed; for all their thriving down, his lips were full and tender, like those of a suckling child. I became aware of an unexplained intensity in the atmosphere about me: I turned my head and saw that, pale and very still, suddenly, on his chair, Mr. Hallam was looking fixedly across the room at Lucius. Unaware of that importunity—no one, I knew, could break down the smiling detachment with which he protected his own identity—Lucius finished the remainder of his cake; and then, lazily, brushing the crumbs from his fingers, he came across the room to choose another one from the spindly three-tiered cake-stand. Mr. Hallam rose. As Lucius passed him, he laid a hand lightly, for a moment, on the black-sleeved arm. 'Well, young man?' he said. The enquiry, a meaningless one, precluded a reply: Lucius smiled doubtfully, dutifully at the man who stood above him, looking down into his eyes. There was a moment of stillness: and then Lucius moved; gently, he edged himself away, he detached himself, without interest and without animus, from a grasp whose demands he chose, he would always choose, to ignore.

'We shall see you, in any case, at the prize-giving,' my mother was saying. 'Lucius, you know, is to speak the Oration——' Mrs. Hallam did not answer her. She was staring across the room

at the hollow, the extinguished face of her husband. She looked quickly from him to Lucius and back again : and as she did so, as she saw before her a situation without remedy, a great dignity came to her, transforming her : it was as if the ingredients of her personality, dispersed or confused at other times, became coherent only under the summons of pain. She looked at her husband and the bright tears came openly into her eyes. She was filled with anguish, not for the familiar, the accepted limbo of her own condition, but for the pain she detected in him : a pain that the years had taught her to recognise, but not to understand or to allay.

When the visitors had gone, my mother lay back on the cushions with a novel that she had borrowed that morning from Mudie's library. 'What a charming man Mr. Hallam is,' she said, surveying, in appreciation, the narrow satin points of her slippers. '—I didn't care so much for his wife, though.' She lifted her slight, ingenious-looking face to the light. 'There's something rather odd about her,' she said. 'Don't you think so?'

A Parson and Princess Caroline

BY ROSE MACAULAY

[*From the manuscript diary of the Rev. Aulay Macaulay.*]

On May 19th, 1794, there arrived in Brunswick a Leicestershire clergyman and young Mr. Walter Farquhar, engaged in one of those continental tours on which young men were sent with a clerical 'governor,' who at once instructed his charges in the more edifying sights of abroad and guarded them from the less, at the same time imparting information and scholarship. As Lord Holland put it, 'I went through Eton and Oxford without disgrace and without distinction, and travelled through Scotland and Switzerland and France with a clergyman.' The clergyman in charge of young Mr. Farquhar was the Reverend Aulay Macaulay, an uncle of the still unborn historian, a learned antiquarian, a writer of treatises on criticism and taste, a translator of theological and philosophic Latin works, a contributor to the *Gentleman's Magazine*, and engaged perpetually on a life of Melancthon which he never got finished. 'Few men,' wrote John Nichols of him in 1815, with the somewhat reckless eulogistic fervour of a friend, 'have greater gifts for writing; few have laid in a greater store either of classical or historical learning, and his enunciation is pleasing and perspicuous . . . a worthy and exemplary divine.'

This amiable and estimable man was, at the time of his sojourn in Brunswick, five and thirty, agreeable of mien, sociable, interested by the persons and places he encountered, and struggling manfully against those worldly ambitions and hopes of preferment which are the clergyman's snare, and which could not but from time to time visit him, particularly since he had for brother-in-law Mr. Thomas Babington, a Leicestershire squire of wide patronage. So far he had only the care of the small parish of Claybrook, to whose antiquities he had devoted much research, and which he had left in the care of a slightly questionable and Jacobinical Mr. Evans, the reports of whose views made him at times feel 'oppressed with doubts regarding the propriety of my conduct in leaving Claybrook' for the pleasures of tourism. He greatly enjoyed travel and sight-seeing, picture galleries, architecture, libraries, and theological and political discussions (often in Latin, for his German was scanty)

with the scholarly clergy and professors whom he met all about the Netherlands and Germany ; these had many of them known and esteemed his uncles, and they spoke together of Melancthon, of the new German philosophers, of the regrettable condition of the French, and of the unfortunate religious enthusiasm which had seized the King of Prussia, causing him to set up Theological Inquisitors and dismiss unorthodox university professors.

What a very strange man by all accounts the King of Prussia is, [commented Mr. Macaulay in the daily journal that he diligently kept]. He leads a very dissolute and lewd life, and at the same time professes great zeal for Orthodoxy, and resigns his Conscience to a set of narrow-minded Enthusiasts who obtain his sanction for very intolerant measures. With what contempt and indignation would Frederick [the Great] if he were alive view a system of policy which tramples on the Sacred Rights of Conscience and deprives the Universities of their brightest ornaments.

This comment was made at Dresden, 'an idle, a dissipated, and an expensive place,' in which, despite the splendours of the picture gallery and the Electoral Library (where the librarian said that Gibbon was his favourite author), there was little encouragement to linger. So on they went to Brunswick, and settled in the Hôtel d'Angleterre, removing presently to the house of a professor.

Of Brunswick and its court at this time different opinions have come down to us. Benjamin Constant, who had spent there five years of minor office at court, had found the town (thinly disguised in *Adolphe* as 'la petite ville de D . . .') and its court dull and ennuyant in the extreme. 'There is something so dull in its very aspect, so glacial in its inhabitants, so spiritless in their intercourse together, so unsociable in their outlook ; they have neither court intrigues nor romantic intrigues nor libertine intrigues.' He wrote thus on first arrival, and was entirely wrong on each point ; Brunswick life seems to have been one gay party after another, never a dull moment, everyone was sociable, and intrigues (well led by the enlightened Duke and his mistress) never ceased. Constant had the French contempt for everything German ; it suited him to sulk, to be, like his *Adolphe*, 'distract, inattentif, ennuyant,' and to make himself disagreeable all round. Ungrateful, for the Duke and his court were ardently francophil, inheriting this passion from the Duke's uncle, Frederick the Great. Another French visitor, the Abbé Baron, complained that the Brunswick nobility smelt of beer, changed their handkerchiefs once a fortnight and their shirts once a month, and ate quantities of coarse food. On the other hand the Comte de Mérode-Westerloo, a few years

later, was dazzled by the gaieties of the little court, which he found brilliant ; while Mirabeau called the Duke truly an Alcibiades, delighting in pleasures and graces, few even among great courts were as well informed as his, and as for his mistress, Mlle von Hertzfeld, she was a most intellectual woman. And Sir John Stanley as a boy had fallen in love with Princess Caroline, aged fourteen, and with the whole place, which was gay with skating parties, beautiful with gardens and aviaries, musical with nightingales in summer and operas and concerts all the year round, and delightful with communal sports, such as shooting at gilt eagles.

As to the Duke, Charles William Ferdinand, it was agreed that he was a man of culture and enlightenment, though rather neurotic and undecided. Sympathising, anyhow in theory, with the advanced party in France, he was yet no democrat ; ' he approves democracy, possibly,' complained François de Custine, ' but he does not love it.' He hated the French *émigrés* who sought refuge with him, ' his cheeks glowed and his eyes glittered like a tiger ' when he saw them ; yet he had profound contempt for the ignorant mob, and was, in short, ' un grand seigneur philosophe, mais au demeurant un grand seigneur.' A handsome, brilliant, passionately musical, travelled man of the world, of great charm but alarming when irritated, he had married thirty years ago George III's foolish garrulous sister Augusta, did not like her (' One of my class must marry for convenience, which is a most unhappy thing ; the heart has nothing to do with these marriages, and the result is to embitter life ') and kept in the palace his mistress, the intelligent Mlle von Hertzfeld, which arrangement embittered the life of the Duchess. Not, as his daughter Caroline said much later, a happy family life. ' Dere were some unlucky tings in our court. My fader was most entirely attached to a lady for thirty years, who in fact was his mistress ; she was the beautifulest creature, and the cleverest . . . but my poor moder could not suffer this attachment, and de consequence was, I did not know what to do between them. . . . '

To this court Professor Zimmermann introduced the English visitors on the Sunday after their arrival in Brunswick ; they might expect, he told them, much civility and condescension from the Duchess. So on Sunday the English parson and his pupil went to court, in ' suitable clothes. I should have felt more comfortable in my usual ones.' They were invited to supper by the Duchess, who was ' very like her brother our King,' showed great affability, and conversed in English. The Dowager Duchess, a clever, conversational woman, sister to Frederick the Great, conversed in French (too fast ; one could not always follow) and asked if

Jacobins were numerous in England, 'to which I answered that I hoped not, that I believed the generality of the people were firmly attached to the Constitution. . . . We saw the Princess Caroline, and one of the young Princes, who has a silly look.' (The princes were, in fact, scarcely as much as half witted, the deplorable result, complained their father, of a marriage of convenience.) The Duke looked interesting, grave and thoughtful, his eye penetrating and his countenance benevolent. The conversation at supper turned on 'the late doings in England,' which made Mr. Macaulay 'very uneasy for the state of that distracted and infatuated nation,' where conspiracy and treason were daily uncovered, its planners incarcerated without trial, and Horne Tooke sent to the Tower. The cheerful Duchess 'seemed to think that there was not much to fear from that description of people—but I own that I am not without my fears. I pray that the friends of reform may keep within the limits of our excellent constitution.' (It seemed too late to pray that Mr. Pitt's government might also do this, since they had already, as is usual at times of national crisis, transcended it by suspending that conveniently evanescent Act, Habeas Corpus.) Changing the subject from politics, the Dowager Duchess, who had philosophical leanings, 'asked me what I thought of Animal Magnetism and Swedenborgians; I answered that I had a very indifferent opinion of the one and of the other . . . I gave the ladies an account of Sunday Schools in England.'

Thus began Mr. Macaulay's successful career at court, where he rapidly became *persona grata*, dining or supping there, or else at the Dowager Duchess's, nearly every day. What happened to the Plan of Study with young Mr. Farquhar we can only surmise, for the young gentleman's instructor was henceforth carried away in a whirl of social life; such tutoring as he was to give in Brunswick was to Princess Caroline. But this was later. At first each day was a round of gaieties; morning promenades, tea-parties, dinners, suppers, operas, animated conversations with the Dowager Duchess about religion and philosophy, with the reigning Duchess about persons and news, with the Duke about politics and literature. The Duchess remarked to him, 'The Duchess Dowager likes your conversation, and so do I. I love an English clergyman, and you must dine with me to-morrow when I shall be alone.' The Duchess was herself less interested in religion than in the five simultaneous wives of the inquisitorial King of Prussia, a religious but dissipated man ('indeed,' wrote Mr. Macaulay, 'His Majesty was very weak, for to a flaming zeal for what would be deemed rank methodism in England, he united a lewd and profligate life

and was married to several wives'), in the Prince of Wales and Mrs. Fitzherbert, and the bad moral example set by the younger generation of the English royal family. 'She seems to be a woman of great feeling,' recorded the clergyman. At supper they had an interesting discussion about angels, over whom the Dowager Duchess shook her head; she could not believe in their existence. The ducal family seems to have leant towards modernism in religion; 'the Duchess upon the whole seems to have rational views of religion, and I have no doubt her heart is warmed by a strong sense of piety. . . . She told me that she did not believe in the Athanasian creed, and she does not seem to have much faith in the existence of the Devil.' Everywhere conversation turned on the philosophy of Professor Kant of Koenigsberg, and often on Gibbon, who was, many Germans told Mr. Macaulay, their favourite author; 'on such occasions I have taken the liberty of saying he was far from being my favourite author, that I considered him deficient in two of the chief qualifications of an historian, impartiality and candour, and that I looked upon his attacks upon the Christian Religion as equally malicious and impotent.' With the Duke ('one of the most agreeable men I ever conversed with') he discussed English and German universities. 'I said I feared that English universities were much more corrupt in point of morals. The Duke said there was the same complaint in German seminaries.' English manners, said the clergyman, as clergymen will, had in recent years undergone a sad change for the worse; he ascribed this to the influx of Asiatic wealth and to imitation of the French. They then discussed the French Revolution. The Duke condemned the French nobility as irreligious and sensual; the Duchess said that if the French won the war all the royal families in Europe would be hanged; the clergyman hoped that reason would shortly resume its reign in France, as these wild levelling schemes, by no means new in history, had never lasted long. Thus disposing of this subject, they spoke of Melancthon, Luther and Kant, and various English noblemen. 'Happy Brunswick,' commented the diarist, 'to have such a prince! O si sic essant omnes!'

Princess Caroline too he liked. 'The Princes seem quite silly, but the Princess has a pleasing countenance.' Caroline, now five or six and twenty, had blowzed a little since she had been young John Stanley's 'beautiful girl of fourteen,' with light and powdered hair hanging in curls on her neck. Neither was she still eighteen, when Mirabeau had found her 'tout à fait aimable, spirituelle, jolie, vive et séillante.' But one gets from Mr. Macaulay, as

later that year from Lord Malmesbury, the picture of a cheerful and amiable young woman, full-figured and pretty-faced, open-hearted, exuberant, frank, indiscreet, at times indelicate, rather vulgar, given to gossip and confidences, affectionate and eager to be loved. Already she had a passionate past; her parents held her on a tight reign, anxious as to what she might do if it were relaxed. The clergyman took of her a favourable view, increased by her flattering confidence in himself as instructor in her future duties.

But as yet this future had not been mooted, and his relations with the Brunswicks were purely social. Highly enjoyable he found them. 'I now find myself as much at ease with the Duchess as if I were with Mrs. Dicey or Mrs. Marriot.' He related to them his dreams, which they patiently sustained; there were morning promenades, operas and dinners (dishes of frogs sometimes at these, he noted), talks with the Duke about history and literature and the framing of a German liturgy which it was hoped would be 'better than ours.' Mr. Kuster the Superintendent 'said I might think myself highly honoured in dining with the Duke, an honour to which none of the Clergy here were ever admitted.' Indeed, he did feel himself highly honoured; even a little exposed to the temptation of vanity, against which he bravely strove. Writing to Mrs. Dicey of Claybrook, he told her that he was 'still the same amidst the splendid circles in which he moved, and not unmindful of the friends he had left behind him.' He cherished, he said, the hope of returning soon to Claybrook. Preferment he did not expect, and was determined to ask no favours of the great; he would be happy with the blessings of a contented mind and quiet conscience.

But a few weeks later he was losing ground.

Wrote to Warner. Said I had every allurements to wish to remain in Germany which could arise from the smiles of the great, from elegant and polished society, and the conversation of the Literati. . . . Said I had full as much reason at present as formerly to offer up the prayer 'lead me not into temptation.' If my temper was not exposed to so many trials as when I had charge of a Parish, I was in danger of being unbalanced by vanity and self-love from the condescension of the great and the flattery of courtiers.

The flattery largely consisted in everyone's assuring him that he was certain soon to be a bishop, a habit that increased after the Prince of Wales's proposal of marriage to Princess Caroline. He steadied his mind by sending to England for the essays of Vicesimus

Knox, Balsham's Memoirs, the *Gentleman's Magazine* for March, April and May, and a copy of his sermon on Sunday Schools, and by corresponding with Mr. Warner about Jacobinism in Leicestershire, which, led, he feared, by the Reverend Mr. Evans of Claybrook, had reached an alarming height; unless Mr. Evans could clear himself from the charge, he must quit Claybrook at once.

Meanwhile the rumours of the impending engagement grew. The Duchess was delighted; Mr. Macaulay thought she buoyed herself up with the reports too much. But she was afraid Caroline might not be happy with the Prince. Mr. Macaulay told her that he had 'a better opinion of him than of any of his brothers, that she would have a delightful resource in the society of the Royal Family, and that a Princess in England who did not interfere in politics might be as happy as her heart could wish.' The Duchess decided that Caroline must learn more English; Mr. Macaulay offered his assistance, which was accepted with satisfaction. Next day 'the Duchess looked at me and then at the Princess and said, smiling, "Who knows but I may see you a Bishop?"' The alliance was soon confirmed by letters from Weymouth. Mr. Macaulay told the Duchess that the Princess 'would have the singular advantage of forming her character under the eye and example of a Queen who was the idol of the nation' (for of Queen Charlotte he took this strange view). The Duchess, making no comment on her sister-in-law, invited him to drink tea at the court that evening and read English with her daughter. 'At dinner the Duke was more bland and affable than usual, but I thought he showed by his looks that he wished the Duchess to be more sparing of words about the great affair. I saw him take out his handkerchief and make two knots, for a sign that every time she went beyond bounds he would make a knot.'

After tea he withdrew with the Princess into an ante-chamber, and gave her an English grammar, out of which, with unerring selection of the interesting, she at once read aloud phrases such as 'My dear, My life, My Angel.'—'Those,' he warned her, 'are expressions *bien tendres*. Come,' he continued, 'let us fall to work, and if your Highness pleases we will read the first number of the *Spectator*.' The princess remarked that she hoped the same good Providence which had brought this matter about would endow her with the proper organs of speech for the prompt acquisition of the language. This, unfortunately, Providence, which played altogether a somewhat capricious part in the whole affair, failed to do, for never could the Princess pronounce *th*. Turning from the *Spectator*, she talked of Soho Square and London theatres.

'Oh what,' she cried, 'shall I feel when I appear in the Grand Theatre!' Her instructor told her that the means of popularity for a princess in England were an exemplary discharge of domestic duties, and never to engage in politics. Oh, she said, she would never engage in politics.

It was from this time on that every one began to congratulate Mr. Macaulay on his future ecclesiastical prospects. But, 'if I ever procure a good living, I hope to remain contented without the mitre.' It was, however, difficult not to hope. The Duchess was particularly encouraging. 'This connection,' she told him, 'is likely to make your fortune; the Duke has a good opinion of you, and I should be glad to have you attached to the Princess and go with her to England.' Mr. Macaulay thanked her; he too thought well of this plan. He would probably be, she added, preceptor to the future little princes, as well as a bishop. Others gratified him by bidding him '*Prenez garde de votre coeur, et ainsi que le Prince de Galles ne sera jaloux de vous.*'

In the intervals of linguistic instruction, and of making the Princess practice the *th* by repeating 'There are three theatres in London,' they conversed about life. She told him how tenderly she loved her father. Her eldest brother, said she, was a poor creature, but she loved her brother William ('Brunswick's fated chieftain' who foremost fighting fell at Quatre Bras) in spite of his propensity to dissipation. She asked her tutor to speak his mind to her without flattery. He did so, and recommended reserve—'*il ne faut pas dire tout ce qu'on pense.*'

I added that I hoped she would excuse me if I advised her upon no occasion whatever to mention the name—I suppose, said she, interrupting me, you mean a certain Dame. I do, replied I. O, said the Princess, never, never, certainly . . . She wished, she said, to pursue that line of conduct which would gain the love of the nation. I recommended Charity to the poor, and to keep before her eyes the example of the Queen, who had so well discharged the duties of a wife and mother.

The Princess's English improved daily; at dinner she would make such remarks as 'I am a peripatetic philosopher,'—'I detest politics,' and 'Mutton and potatoes is a good dish.' Nothing could be more agreeable than these dinners, or than exchanging anecdotes with the Duke about Garrick, Foote, Quin, Lord Sandwich, and George Selwyn's passion for seeing executions. The Princess at dinner 'looked vastly well,' but 'I observe that she puts on paint, which I hope she may be prevailed on to lay aside before she goes to England.' She enjoyed eating, but had simple tastes; during

their lessons she would have a saucer full of small potatoes brought in, with butter and some salt. He told her it was a wholesome dish, and one enjoyed by Roman ladies in the time of Numa Pompilius. 'She asked me if the Prince of Wales went regularly to church. I said I did not know. She shook her head and said she was afraid not.' He had promised the Duchess to advise her daughter against rouge, but seems to have got no nearer to this than giving her an essay to read containing 'humorous strictures on painting the face.' With both the Duke and Duchess he had serious conversations about the Princess's prospects, which caused them anxiety, for they knew both their daughter and their future son-in-law too well; the one was flighty and indiscreet, the other selfish, with passions already engaged. What would come of it? The Duchess could only 'pray that her Daughter might soon be in a situation to make her attend to the duties of a Mother.' The Duke requested Mr. Macaulay to counsel his pupil for her good; the clergyman therefore composed for her an address (duly copied into his diary) which he called 'Advice to a Princess,' full of exemplary admonitions.

Among all this alarm and despondency, the young lady herself, though she had her ups and downs, was on the whole in excellent spirits. Mr. Macaulay thought increasingly well of her disposition and good nature; he spoke home truths to her and found them well received. She told him what a plain and economical life she led; she would like to breakfast on potatoes and water in England, and asked whether she might do so with propriety. 'I said they would doubtless be surprised at her calling for potatoes at Breakfast, but I was glad she had a relish for such plain and simple food.'— 'I shall not cost the nation much,' she said. What with instruction in the English Prayer Book, in her duties as Princess of Wales, papers from the *Spectator* and *Tatler*, Lord Chesterfield's Letters, *The Suspicious Husband*, and dialogues of social life that he composed for her, he was giving her a varied introduction to the English scene. They were on easy and happy terms, eating small potatoes together 'with as much natural and unreserved pleasantry as if I had been sitting with my sister and the children at Rothley Temple.' She would interrupt their discussions on Paley, German theology, and French philosophy (which she duly reprobated) with 'Come, let us leave off reading and tell each other funny stories.' A merry-spirited young woman; the parson might have reflected that she would have need later of all her natural cheerfulness.

Meanwhile, he was himself wrestling manfully with vanity and ambition. He thanked his friends in England for their spiritual

admonitions, for he felt that he 'stood on slippery ground amidst the gaiety and splendour of a court,' and feared that he was less under the influence of religion than he had believed. He wrote to a friend that he was

not prepared to say I should decline a station of eminence, but I have prayed to God to banish all hankering after those slippery places called high stations from my mind, and I would not riches—for after all, what do they amount to?

'What though we wade in wealth and soar in fame, etc.,
And dust to dust concludes our noblest song.'

We brought nothing into this world, etc., and in a short time these words will be pronounced over our poor remains!

With the ambivalence of his profession, he meanwhile enjoyed the gaieties of this brief life, spending every evening at the opera, at the ball, at supper at court, but never neglecting his readings with the Princess. He warned her against over-optimism, telling her she must not expect to find her way always strewn with roses in England, since every situation in life had its trials. She listened, agreed, smiled, and continued to take, on the whole, the rosy view. After all, if her disagreeable Aunt Charlotte had made good as queen consort, surely she need not fear much. His affection for the lively and touching little romp grew steadily; he ordered a copy of a miniature of her, and sent it to his sister Babington. He went through and explained the English marriage service with her, such parts of it, that is, as were suitable; he told her mother that he generally omitted some of it, 'and, on showing her the parts, she said I was quite right. We had a little conversation about the Athanasian Creed, and I gave my reasons for not reading it.' Leading his pupil into the higher realms of thought, 'we talked of Metaphysics, and particularly of Pneumatology, and also of Astronomy, of Herschel, and the Georgium Sidus.' How much Caroline enjoyed these topics, he does not record. She was probably too much excited by the imminent arrival of Lord Malmesbury with the marriage contract, and by all the talk about Lady Jersey, to attend closely to her studies.

Lord Malmesbury arrived on November 20th; and thenceforth there are indications that the clergyman felt a little pushed aside, even a trifle jealous. A feeling possibly perceived by the kindly Duchess and Princess, for what they said to him about the ambassador was tactfully less complimentary than Lord Malmesbury reports their manners towards himself. 'The Duchess does not like Lord Malmesbury so well as Mr. Eliot . . . The Princess

told me she had been upon the reserve with Lord M. She did not appear to be vastly fond of him.' Lord Malmesbury, who set great store by good appearance in royal persons, vexed Macaulay by telling the Princess that he liked rouge. 'I am sorry Lord M. said so.' However, they were on friendly enough terms, and the ambassador undertook to procure a passage to England for the clergyman and young Mr. Farquhar with the Princess's suite. But, 'there are several people who do not like Lord M.,' the diary records. 'I have some reason to think the Princess is not over and above fond of him.'

On December 3rd the diary gives a detailed account of the ceremony of the demanding and granting of the Princess's hand—a grand occasion, ending in a court ball and supper. They were soon all to leave Brunswick for England. Gaiety and parties pushed aside studies for a week; after that, the readings were resumed, and Mr. Macaulay instructed the Princess, at her father's request, on the nature of the constitution of Britain. She praised the constitution, but 'doubted whether our Morals were purer' than those in other countries. Nor, said she, did the English handle their knives and forks with ease and grace, or pare apples neatly; 'she showed me how an apple ought to be pared, and offered me several pieces on the point of her knife.' She did not set much store by all the elegancies of English social habits; some she regarded as finicking; she 'observed to-day that there was a particular circumstance of which she heard they made great account in England, and that was keeping the finger-nails in nice order, but she said it was not worth laying so great a stress on what she thought a trifle.'

This is the last conversation with the Princess, that the diarist records; some pages following it are cut out; it is possible that they contained indiscretions. But his conversations with the Duke and Duchess were daily set down; they all dealt with the parental anxieties as to the future. 'The Duke expressed great anxiety that she might conduct herself properly—be virtuous in private life and prudent in public, and never open her mouth on politics.' (Lord Malmesbury's somewhat drastic counsel had been perfect silence on *all* subjects for six months after arrival.) 'The Duke said he wished I might be near her. Where do you live, Sir, said he. I answered in Leicestershire, about 93 miles from London. I heartily wish that you could be about the Princess and give her good advice, said he.' Mr. Macaulay said he too wished it, but that it was a delicate point to meddle in. If the Duke and his daughter could have had their way, Lord Malmesbury would have

been her Lord Chamberlain and Mr. Macaulay her chaplain; surrounded thus by good counsels she might have a chance, thought her father, of holding down her job without disaster. To the clergyman's remark that he prayed God the connection might prove happy, the Duke returned, 'You have reason, Sir, to pray to God that he would be pleased to guide her heart and govern her conduct.' As to the Duchess, she was much worried by reports of the undesirable persons admitted to Carlton House; her daughter, she felt, would be alone in a foreign court, surrounded by envious intriguing ladies, talking with the utmost indiscretion to all of them, led astray by others and by her own folly. The Duchess had had an anonymous letter from London, which she showed him, warning her against that she-devil Lady Jersey.

The Princess and her suite, with Lord Malmesbury, left Brunswick at the end of December, in bitterly cold weather, and two days later Macaulay and Farquhar followed them; they were to meet at Stade, and sail with the squadron for England. The last entry in the diary was made at Hanover; it records a conversation with a Hanover pastor, 'an old friend of my uncle Alexander's; I was much pleased with his manners . . . We talked of ecclesiastical affairs; he said that public worship was too much neglected in Germany, and that there was in general a great indifference about religion, which he imputed to the progress of luxury and to the rage for political speculation. . . .'

A not unfamiliar conversation, cut off (by torn-out pages) none too soon. There is no more of the journey; this last little manuscript book, labelled 'December 1794–November 15th 1795' has been purged of all its entries after that new year's day in Hanover. No word remains to tell us with what deepening depression the royal marriage tragedy, enacted in the leaking secrecy of the court, must have been watched from Leicestershire. Did the clergyman perhaps write to his Princess, attempting to obey her father's desire that he should continue to offer her counsel? Or delicately suggesting that her former tutor might be given a place in her court? Whatever occurred, it must have early become apparent to him that the flattering predictions of clerical advancement, of an almost certain bishopric, were not to be fulfilled, and that the favour of so discarded a princess could be no recommendation. If in his intimate diary he set down sad or resigned reflections on the vanity of human hopes, the fickleness of human fortunes, he did not allow them to remain. In 1796 he was presented by his brother-in-law, Thomas Babington, with the incumbency of Rothley, and there he remained until his death in 1819, working on his life of Melanc-

thon, planning a new edition and life of Pope, 'dividing his time,' wrote his friend John Nichols in his *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century*, 'between the duties of the pastoral care, the pursuits of Literature, and the enjoyments of social life.'—'I am now as comfortably situated,' he wrote to Nichols in 1798, 'as a country parson can desire; and no ambitious dreams disturb my repose, notwithstanding the following passage in a letter from a friend in high life: "I have no doubt of your eventual promotion in the Church; for your Princess does not forget her friends."'

Nor did she do so; for

long after her Royal Highness's arrival in this kingdom, Mr. Macaulay was distinguished by repeated proofs of grateful recollection, as he was afterwards by the good old Duchess on her return [after the Duke's death] to this her native country. But unfortunately the *friendships* of the great do not always lead to their *patronage*. Mr. Macaulay was of too lofty and independent a spirit to solicit preferment, and it very rarely flows spontaneously from mere merit. . . . The sequestered position of Mr. Macaulay has however been a loss, not only to himself but to the literary world. Few men have greater abilities . . . but his oratory has been principally exhibited to rustic congregations, and his productions from the press are not very numerous. He has indeed meditated loftier flights, and had planned a thousand schemes for a variety of useful and entertaining books

—but few were completed. He lived and died one of those quiet, obscure, scholarly parish clergy in which the Church of England used formerly to abound, and the dazzling interlude at the court of Brunswick, with its unwonted social contacts, its exalted, brittle hopes and dreams, receded year by year further into the legendary, surprising past, a theme for anecdote and philosophic, wistful musing.

But out of the past a voice would from time to time summon the vicar from Rothley to London, to preach before his princess. On one such occasion (as he told his children, who passed it on to theirs) he took for his text Acts xxiv. 25—'And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come, Felix trembled'—and was struck, when too late, with the fear that text and sermon might offend. But the flighty, good-humoured princess was seldom offended; it was one of her virtues. A princess who could forgive being told by an ambassador that she must be cleaner in her person would scarcely mind being preached at by a friendly clergyman about righteousness, temperance, or even judgment to come. To the unhappy, exuberant exile of Blackheath and Kensington such

counsels were not uninteresting ; she always enjoyed being talked to about herself. And the vicar of Rothley liked her. The mortified, discarded wife in a foreign land, loathed by her husband, spoken of contemptuously by his relations as 'a very foolish and disagreeable person,' labelled coldly by Lord Holland as 'a woman of indelicate manners, indifferent character, and not very inviting appearance . . . always in a state bordering on insanity and sometimes actually insane . . . I have no doubt she was mad'—the once cheerful, now so reduced young woman must have found the faithful liking of one who had known her at home in Brunswick, who had taught and advised her and shared with her little potatoes, a comfort and solace.

He died in 1819, before the last phase of her humiliation when, in England again after her continental wanderings and jauntings, 'bloated and disfigured by sorrow and by the life she led,' her florid good looks run utterly to seed, she suffered her final rebuffs and died, two years after himself. He never saw her thus ; she remained in his memory as the jolly, friendly German princess whom he had tutored, and for whom, though the connection was to bring him no advancement, he felt affection to the end.

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*George Duke Marquess and Earle of Buckingham Earle
of Coventry Viscount Villers Baron of Whaddon P. Ross of Hamlak
Knight of the most noble order of the Garter.*

J. Verelst gavit

J. Becket sc.

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‘Great Villiers’

BY HESTER W. CHAPMAN

*In the worst inn's worst room, with mat half-hung,
The floors of plaster, and the walls of dung,
On once a flock-bed, but repaired with straw,
With tape-tied curtains, never meant to draw,
The George and Garter dangling from that bed
Where tawdy yellow strove with dirty red,
Great Villiers lies—alas! how changed from him,
That life of pleasure and that soul of whim!
Gallant and gay, in Cliveden's proud alcove,
The bower of wanton Shrewsbury and love. . . .*

In November 1685 the Duke of Buckingham's sister died, having survived her third husband, Colonel Thomas Howard. Her only child, Mary, and her son-in-law were also dead, leaving no heirs; and so Buckingham's only remaining kinsfolk were distant cousins. He was very much alone, except for Brian Fairfax who, with his wife and five children, was now settled at Bolton Percy and had a house at Bishopshill in York; but Buckingham's spirits were sufficiently resilient for him to embarrass the King by a farewell gift. James had expressed a wish to buy some of his deer; through a friend the Duke replied:

I cannot bring down my mind low enough to think of selling red deer, but if you believe that His Majesty would take it kindly of me, I will present him with ten brace of the best that I have.

With this characteristic gesture Villiers retired to Yorkshire. All he had left of his many possessions were some scattered pieces of land, his father-in-law's riverside house in York, and Helmsley Castle, once the greatest stronghold in England, now a mass of gigantic ruins enclosing a small portion of Elizabethan architecture in which the Duke made his home. He had inherited this property and the surrounding estate from his mother; shortly before he regained it by his marriage his father-in-law, by Cromwell's order, had utterly destroyed the Castle itself, leaving the little sixteenth-century wing almost untouched; it consisted of a two-storied suite

of rooms, attached to a thirteenth-century tower. Here, surrounded by piles of shattered stonework and a double moat beyond which stretched the hills and moors of the wildest and poorest county in England, Buckingham, with such companions as his circumstances afforded—seedy poor gentlemen, drunken fox-hunting boors—settled down to the life of a country squire.

He did his best to keep up the round of pleasures and hobbies to which he had been accustomed; he built an annexe to the house in York for his chemistry, a portion of which still exists; in a cupboard in the wall may be seen the little oven in which he heated his brews and distillations. All that is left of Buckingham House, as it came to be called, is a tiny public house, registered as *The Plumbers' Arms* and known locally as 'The Cock and Bottle.' Here are the little rooms, the winding staircases, the heavy, undecorated oak panelling of the building in which Buckingham continued his hopeless search for gold. From the diamond-paned windows he could still see the wooden turret with its revolving lights that he had installed on the Minster Tower in the event of an invasion by the Dutch during the days of his greatness. In the grounds below, with their 'noble ascent out of Skeldergate, and gardens extending to the ramparts of the city walls beyond,' he could walk up and down among the trees and the flowers of which his father-in-law had been so proud; and here, 'according to his natural gaiety of temper, he set all those diversions on foot in which his whole life had hitherto been spent.'

What diversions were these? Alternating between York and Helmsley, he who had once been the finest gentleman in England arrived one night at the Castle with a 'company of ruffians' and made a riot at an inn. Here, where he 'never went out of his way to open a gate' for all his land, stretching from Helmsley to the sea, was still—and how characteristically—unenclosed, Buckingham threw himself into the last excitement that was left him. With his shoddy, toss-pot companions he hunted with the Stantondale, the Sinnington and the Bildale, the oldest pack in England, of which he was Master. The days were, perhaps, endurable and even happy; but when the weary hounds were whipped in for the journey home and dusk crept over Helmsley—then, as he rode in under the shattered portcullis the long evening must have stretched ahead of him in deathly gloom. Then he had time to feel his age, his failing health, his loneliness, his obscurity, to recall the demands of his creditors, to wonder whether the remedies for his perpetual chills and rheumatism were doing him any good, whether his huntsman Foster was neglecting the hounds and

whether that last combination was getting him any nearer the philosopher's stone. . . . And yet, what use had he made of liberty and power? 'Methinks thy body is not a prison, but rather a tavern or bawdy house to thy soul,' he reflected.

The rooms that Buckingham inhabited during the last months of his life are as time, not the hand of man, has left them; after he died they were never used again and fell into decay. The delicate panelling, the plaster frieze in which the Manners and Villiers arms are interspersed with dolphins, mermaids and fleur-de-lys, the Tudor roses on the ceiling, the glazed tiles on the floor are still there; among a heap of fragments half a silver sugar-sifter and a brass chessman stand out, reminders of uneventful days and quiet evenings. Colourless and worn, the decoration of this final refuge yet reflects a taste that must have seemed to Buckingham hopelessly old-fashioned and depressing. Cliveden, Owthorpe, Wallingford House, Burley-on-the-Hill, Barn Elms with its dark memories, Whitehall with its long galleries and innumerable doors, the house in Dowgate by the busy Thames—all, all were lost; and he was alone, in spirit if not in fact, in a little room with rats in the wainscoting, owls and curlews sweeping round the walls—and for neighbours and companions a set of Yorkshire squires, celebrated even then for their independence, their churlishness, their contempt for the polished manners and sophisticated outlook of which he had been the best example. A writer of the sixteenth century has summed up the atmosphere in which Villiers now moved in some lines which he may have read and would certainly have agreed with—

They have no superior to court, no civilities to practise; a sour and sturdy humour is the consequence, so that a stranger is shocked by a tone of defiance in every voice, and an air of fierceness in every countenance.

No possessions, no associations could prevent Buckingham from being a stranger in such a circle. Brooding, remembering, he longed for sleep, 'sound as death and swift as life' and then started from it, because it 'torments me with such dreams that it is rather the imagination of hell than of death.' Then he wrote these two lines, the last of all his verses:

In all those mighty volumes of the stars
There's writ no sadder story than my fate.

On another page of his note-book he put the heading 'Tears' and wrote beneath it—

You must water your life well, if you would have it grow again.

But he was not entirely forgotten. One day, riding across the moors and the flat country where the Danes had landed, came a messenger, bearing a letter. It was from Etheredge, 'gentle George,' the friend of his prosperous days. Elegant, urbane, Sir George wrote from Ratisbon, in terms that indicated his determination to impress posterity. He expostulated with Buckingham for 'leaving the play at the beginning of the Fourth Act,' and declared his amazement that

... the Duke of Buckingham, who never vouchsafed his embraces to any ordinary beauty, would ever condescend to sigh and languish for the heiress-apparent of a thatched cottage in a straw hat, flannel petticoat, stockings of as gross a thrum as the Bluecoat Boys' caps at the Hospital and a smock (the Lord defend me from the wicked idea of it) of as coarse a canvas as ever served an apprenticeship to a mackerel boat. Who would have believed that Your Grace . . . would, in the last scene of life, debauch his condition in execrable Yorkshire ale? and that he who all his life-time had either seen princes his playfellows or companions would submit to the nonsensical chat and barbarous language of farmers and higglers?

To Etheredge or to some other correspondent (his letter bears no address or date, but is ascribed to this period) Buckingham explained that

I neither am nor desire to be out of the world, but I confess I am grown old enough to be unwilling to lose my time, and therefore . . . I thought it better to do nothing by myself than to play the fool in company.

Did he not think of Frances Stuart and her card-castles as he wrote the last words? He then gave an extremely guarded and purposely obscure account of the political situation as he had left it, spoke of himself as

... intent about looking after my farm . . . in order to the securing every man in England his religion and liberty and estate (things which we conceive to be of some importance, though they have not of late been much talked of . . .)

Broken, old and ill, George Villiers could still dream of a free England; but he had been so busy nailing his colours to the mast that he had let the ship sink beneath him. This is his last surviving letter.

His fifty-ninth birthday was now behind him, and he was again

at Helmsley for the hunting. On the Fourteenth of April, 1687, the meet was held in the courtyard of the Castle. Foster, with one of his sons as whip, was there; their charges, Dido, Spandigo, Truelove, Bonnylass, Dairymaid, Ruler and the rest, made a moving patch of brown and black and white between the grey stone and the pale spring flowers.¹ The Bilsdale had formerly hunted both fox and red deer; the only deer now left in Yorkshire wandered at ease within park walls.

Presently the hunt, the tall figure of the Master at its head, rode past the scattered cottages below the moat and away beyond the ring of the hills. The Castle was empty and silent. Morning sank into afternoon. Still there came no sound of hoofs beneath the archways. Eighteen miles away, at an inn in York, James Douglas, Earl of Arran, was resting on his way into Scotland. Presently news came to him that the great Duke of Buckingham was dying—was perhaps already dead—at Kirkby Moorside, six miles from Helmsley.

Lord Arran, now in his thirty-first year, was Buckingham's second cousin once removed. Respectable, high-minded, not very clever, he could not but deplore the course of life which had brought his magnificent relative into the squalor and obscurity that now surrounded him. He had kept in touch with the Duke's trustees in the hope that something might have been saved out of his ruined fortunes; after the Duchess of Buckingham, Arran was next of kin, and he could not help thinking that he must be mentioned in the Duke's will, even though there was so little to leave. It would be unfair to suggest that he wished to profit by the confusion of Buckingham's affairs; but where there had been so much there might still remain, unknown to the Duke himself, some little property or possession worth having. So Lord Arran went to Kirkby Moorside as quickly as possible.

Where the Bilsdale found and what area they covered during the morning and afternoon of the Fourteenth of April is not known; but they ended with a three hours' run. The climax was reached for Buckingham, when his horse dropped dead beneath him at a cross-roads called Chop Gate, some twelve miles from Helmsley. Here the fox went to ground, and huntsman and whip began to dig. Meanwhile Buckingham waited, presumably sending for another horse, and helped with the digging. He was exhausted and very

¹ A hound descended from the Bilsdale and one of the descendants of Foster hunted as recently as 1898; the Bilsdale ceased to exist in 1912; the names of Buckingham's hounds were handed down from one pack to another (*Victoria County History*).

hot ; he probably threw off his coat as he sank back on the grass, which was soaking ; several hours passed before his groom arrived with fresh horses.

Of all George Villiers' 'excesses' this, a prolonged sitting on damp ground, is the one that has caused most comment among his contemporaries. To be incapably drunk every night, rotten with disease and frequently subject to the languor that follows extreme self-indulgence—all this was the natural concomitant of wealth, position and breeding. But to sit on the wet grass—that was a folly that shocked as much as it bewildered them : only a madman would do such a thing ; and Buckingham's sudden and fatal sickness was always ascribed to this last piece of eccentricity.

By the time the Duke was able to leave Chop Gate and the stone, ever afterwards called Buckingham's Stone, where his horse had fallen, it became plain that he was too ill to go very far. At Kirkby Moorside he decided to dismount and rest at one of his tenants' houses—the best in the town—in the market-place ; he would stay the night and move on to York the next day : Helmsley was too draughty and uncomfortable for a man in his condition. A few hours later he changed his mind and sent a messenger to Brian Fairfax to ask for a bed at his house in Bishopshill.

Kirkby Moorside was an exposed, lonely little town. Straggling groups of stone houses sloped upwards to the market-place on one side and to the churchyard on the other, with the heather-covered dales above and the flat country stretching away below. *The King's Head*, with its gaily painted sign of Henry VIII, stood next to Tinley Garth, a two-storied building with four square rooms on each floor, twisting oak staircase and small leaded windows. Each room was panelled in the same heavy, unornamented style ; the ceilings were low, the atmosphere close, smoky and cold.

Here, in the largest of the four upper rooms, Buckingham was put to bed. The rheumatism which had been hanging about him for so long had now turned to an aching fever ; he was in great suffering and discomfort from swelling and inflammation of the stomach ; no one seemed to know what remedies to apply for this, for there was no doctor handy, and the Duke ordered fomentations to relieve the pain. He was not much perturbed about himself but distressed at not being able to leave so dreary and uncomfortable a refuge.

After a miserable day and a night which brought an increase rather than a diminution of his sufferings, Buckingham was told that Lord Arran had come from York. He roused himself, and greeted his cousin with something of his old grace and energy.

But as soon as Arran drew near the bed he saw that the Duke was dying. Buckingham told him of his symptoms and said that when the swelling went down he would be at ease ; as Arran looked doubtful the Duke declared emphatically that so far from being dangerously ill, he would be about again in a few days—he had been on horseback only two days earlier—but the ague that had long hung about him had made him weak. ‘I am sure,’ the sick man added hastily as he saw his kinsman’s swarthy face lengthen, ‘I am in no danger of my life.’—‘His understanding was as good as ever,’ says Arran, ‘and his noble parts were so entire that though I saw death in his looks at first sight, he would by no means think of it.’

Arran then sent his groom back to York for Dr. Whaler ; Buckingham suggested that his cousin should stay until he was able to move and Arran, consenting, had time to observe the ‘miserable condition’ the Duke was in and in what a ‘pitiful place’ he was. ‘I confess it made my heart bleed,’ he said afterwards.

As soon as Dr. Whaler, accompanied by another physician, arrived, he saw that the Duke’s case was desperate, and told Arran so. His Grace now felt some relief from pain ; this was due, not to the remedies he had been taking, but to the mortification that had set in and was rapidly ascending ; though he ‘enjoyed the free exercise of his senses, in a day or two at most, it would kill him.’

But there was something about the Duke’s alertness and his commanding manner that made it impossible for them to tell him of his condition. Arran, who believed that the end was near, agreed that his cousin should be told, and by him ; but it was hard. Very much discomposed, he left the doctors and again entered the bedroom.

Arran began by warning Buckingham as gently as possible of his danger ; he was sharply contradicted. ‘It is not as you apprehend,’ said the Duke. ‘In a day or two I shall be well.’ Again Arran withdrew ; this time he sent for a clergyman, not the local incumbent, but the Reverend Mr. Gibson, who was a neighbour of Buckingham and lived only a mile away. Then, remarking to Gibson that it was high time His Grace ‘began to think of another world, for it was impossible for him to continue long in this,’ Arran again approached Buckingham and told him bluntly that he was dying.

At this point, no doubt, Mr. Gibson let fall one or two of those scriptural aphorisms with which he had primed himself on his journey across the moors. But Villiers seemed not to hear him.

His expression had altered : he was overcome : he could not face death. Arran was sympathetic ; but, as he said to Gibson, they would not have discharged the duty of honest men 'or I of a faithful kinsman,' he added, 'if we had suffered him to go out of this world without preparing for death, and looking into his conscience.'

So the grisly work began. For the next six or seven hours, until the Duke began to lose consciousness, Arran and Gibson took it in turns to urge him to make his peace with God and declare his heir ; for a long time he would do neither. It would be unjust to blame the upright, intensely conscientious Arran for this badgering ; he saw his once splendid cousin in danger of everlasting punishment and the wrangles over his estate prolonged indefinitely ; but it is certain that he made Buckingham's last hours of consciousness a torment and a misery ; instead of sinking peacefully into oblivion he was bothered and bullied about a number of things that had long ceased to concern him.

Who, Arran began, should be 'an assistant' to his cousin, 'during the short time he had to live?' Buckingham made no reply ; he was still adjusting his mind to the idea that life was slipping from him. Arran considered a moment and recalled the gossip he had heard about a conversion, and one of the King's Jesuits—was it Father Petre?—visiting Buckingham before he left London. Should he send for a priest? he asked. 'No, no—I am not one of that persuasion,' replied the Duke angrily, 'I will hear no more of it, I will have nothing to do with them—' And he muttered something about a 'parcel of silly fellows.'

Rather relieved, Arran suggested that he should send for Mr. Gibson or the parson of the parish, Mr. Shepherd. Buckingham refused. A Presbyterian, then? 'No,' said Villiers wearily, 'those fellows always made me sick with their whine and cant.'—'I thought,' added Arran, in extenuation of his own lack of orthodoxy, 'any act that should be like a Christian was what his condition now wanted most.' So the night went by.

At seven o'clock the next morning the tireless relative was at the bedside again. Surely it was now time to send for the parson of the parish? To his immense gratification, the exhausted Duke consented. 'Yes, pray send for him,' he said quietly. He was feeling very low, very weary ; perhaps he was dying, after all, though somehow he could not believe it, for his mind was still perfectly clear.

Mr. Shepherd then arrived, and began to read the prayers for the dying ; before continuing, however, he felt it his duty to

ask a question. The answer to one of the most absorbing, most discussed secrets of the day was within his grasp. 'What is Your Grace's religion?' he enquired respectfully.

There was a pause. The watchers round the bed were on tenterhooks for the answer. At last the dying man gasped out—'It is an insignificant question.' Then, aware perhaps of the thrill of horror which greeted the words, he added feebly, 'I have been a shame and a disgrace to all religions—but if you can do me any good, do.'

Mollified, Mr. Shepherd began the prayers again; and Buckingham joined in them 'very freely.' Dying as he had lived, he desired to adapt himself, and succeeded in doing so. There was, surely, no more ironic moment than this in all his long life.

Arran, Gibson, Shepherd and the weeping servants were now joined by Colonel Liston, an old friend of Buckingham's. During the course of the afternoon Mr. Gibson asked the Duke about his will—had he made one? 'None,' was the answer. At this point Arran found it prudent to withdraw and the clergyman, no doubt instructed to find out all that he could, continued his enquiries on worldly matters. Who was to be His Grace's heir? Buckingham said nothing. Heir to what? he might have answered: but his strength was going.

Gibson then named various persons in order, as it were, of probability. 'My Lady Duchess?'—'No.' A long list of cousins and collaterals followed, with the same result. 'The Earl of Purbeck?'—'By no means.'—'Who, then?' Still there was no answer, and Gibson, in despair, applied to Lord Arran for further advice.

Arran, hearing that his name had met with the same negative as all the others, began to lose his patience. He told the Duke sternly that it was 'absolutely fit, during the time he had the exercise of his reason' (for Buckingham now showed signs of nearing collapse), 'to do something to settle his affairs.' But Villiers remained firm. He had nothing to settle on anyone, and nothing to say.

Very much disturbed, Lord Arran then pointed out the desirability of a Christian death. 'Since you call yourself of the Church of England,' he said coldly, 'the parson is ready here to administer the sacrament to you.'—'I will take it,' said Buckingham, and Arran left him to give the necessary orders.

Meanwhile Brian Fairfax had received a second message—the Duke was dying. In spite of the fact that they had drifted apart

during these last years, he loved his old patron and friend with all his heart. As he hurried towards Kirkby Moorside, riding post for greater speed, the afternoon wore away into evening, and in the little room above the silent street Buckingham was receiving the last sacraments of the Church of England, Gibson and Colonel Liston receiving with him. As the prayers were begun he called out, very loudly, three or four times, in protest, as Arran seems to imply, for he was not yet willing to 'take death to him.' A few moments later he became perfectly composed and received the sacrament 'with all the decency imaginable.' Again Arran felt a twinge of pity.

Gibson, who seems to have shared the Earl's passion for correctness, was 'somewhat doubtful of [the Duke's] swallowing the bread because of his weakness and pain.' But long afterwards he remarked on the dying man's 'seeming devotion' and added modestly, 'So far as I ever had any discourse with His Grace, he was always pleased to express a love for good men and good things, how little able soever he was to live up to what he knew.'

At this moment Brian Fairfax hurried into the room, thrust aside the bed-curtains and grasped the Duke's hand; but Buckingham was speechless now, and could only look 'very earnestly,' as if he wanted to say something; he held on to Brian's hand. Lord Fairfax of Gilling then arrived: but the Duke did not recognise him. So the evening passed into night. At eleven o'clock, without a struggle or a sigh, George Villiers ceased to breathe.

Early the next morning Lord Arran wrote to Dr. Sprat, giving a detailed account of the Duke's last hours. Then he turned to financial matters. It was all far worse than he had imagined: the wreckage was appalling. He could hardly bring himself to believe that there was no will, for the servants now declared that there was, somewhere, 'a sealed parchment' which they thought contained it. Had Buckingham destroyed this paper? Had he entrusted it to some one else? Nobody was sure. 'But my Lord himself said positively in the presence of several that he had no will in being; so what to make of this I cannot tell you,' Arran concluded. He took care to point out that he himself had done nothing covertly; Mr. Gibson and Mr. Brian Fairfax had been witnesses of all his proceedings. 'The confusion he has left his affairs in will make his heir, whoever he be, very uneasy,' he added, '... there is nothing here but confusion, not to be expressed.' Not a farthing was left for the expenses of the funeral, although Buckingham had, at intervals, entrusted his stewards

with 'vast sums.' Upon opening the Duke's strong-box in the presence of Gibson and Brian Fairfax Arran found it empty, save for some 'loose letters of no concern ; but such as they are, I have ordered them to be locked up and given to my Lady Duchess.' Lord Fairfax of Gilling had consented to take charge of the small amount of the Duke's plate and linen until the Duchess' wishes were known.

Arran's thoughts turned then to the tall figure lying in the little room upstairs. He had already given orders that the body should be embalmed, and soon the experts from York would be at their work : the intestines would be buried at Helmsley. Meanwhile, as the nearest male relative, he had taken the liberty of giving His Majesty a full account of the last hours and his own share in them, at the same time sending to him, under separate cover, the Duke's George and blue ribbon, 'to be disposed of as His Majesty shall think fit.' The body would of course remain at Helmsley until the Duchess' pleasure was known. As the correct and painstaking nobleman signed and sealed his letter he might well reflect that he had fulfilled all the duties of a cousin, a man of honour and a Christian. What now remained ? Only to leave Kirkby Moorside and its melancholy associations as quickly as possible. One detail escaped him. Buckingham's death was entered in the register of Kirkby Moorside as that of 'Gorges Vilaus, Lord Dooke of Bookingham' and his intestines never reached the parish of Helmsley.

No expression of the Duchess of Buckingham's grief has been recorded ; she may have thought it best to destroy the letters that Lord Arran sent on to her, for they have not survived. But there was one memento that she cherished until her death seventeen years later—a love-letter from her brilliant husband, ironically enough, the only love-letter of his that has been preserved. It was not even written to poor plain Mary herself ('Love in writing is only compliment,' he had said once) but to one of her servants ; its contents place it in the period of their courtship. The marks of the ribbon and the seal are still there. The writing is elegant and clear :—

The little ribbon I received from you last night instead of binding up my wound has made it greater, and though I have kept it ever since as near my heart as I could I can find no other effects by it than the being much less at my ease than I was before. I have not slept one wink, never since I saw you, neither have I been able to think of any other thing than how to find a means of speaking to your dear Mistress for I dare not without her leave presume to call

her mine, though it be already out of my power ever to call rightly so anybody else. If I were less concerned I should perhaps be more successful in my endeavours to wait upon her, but the truth is I am not now in a condition to design anything well myself, the passionate desire of seeing her running so much in my head, that it does not give me leave to contrive a way how I should be able to compass it. I do therefore most humbly beg your assistance, since I am utterly unable to afford any to myself, and do hope that if your good nature be not sufficient to persuade you to do it, at least your curiosity will, to see how great a charge it will be in your power so suddenly to work upon me for one minute's conversation with that dear Mistress of yours (if you could order it so as that her answer would not make me absolutely despair) would, from as troublesome an estate of mind as ever creature was in, settle me in a condition not to envy the happiest man living. This is the only request I have to make to you, or indeed that I have to make in this world, the gaining of your dear Mistress' good opinion being the utmost ambition of your most humble and obliged fellow-servant.¹

For more than six weeks the body of the Duke lay at Helmsley Castle. Then he began his last journey to the city that had seen his greatest triumphs and his bitterest failures. At midnight, on June the Twenty-First, after a splendid funeral, more elaborate and costly, it was said, than that given to His late Majesty, the Second Duke of Buckingham came to rest for ever by the father he had never known, the brother he had lost and the bastard infant that had helped to cause his ruin. His place in the family vault bears no monument or effigy.²

His reputation lives on in a confusion of echoes, from the 'wonderful man' of Echard to the sonorous condemnation of Oldmixon—'and may all fortunes and honours so acquired so expire': from the far-off whisper of Sir Edward Nicholas' first judgment, 'But I doubt he wants ballast'—to the sour comments of Burnet, the mutterings and boomings of Clarendon and the acidities of Shaftesbury—'. . . unusual and ungrave . . . good for nothing . . . wholly given up to mirth and pleasure . . . giddy-pated . . .' Above these rise the voices of Frances Stuart—'Send all over the town for him'; of Anna Shrewsbury—'I will make him comply in all things'; of Brian Fairfax lamenting the 'tragi-comedy of his life'; of Mrs. Aphra Behn declaring that 'Wit and wit's God for Buckingham shall mourn'; and of the Yorkshire country people, whose jingle

¹ From the original manuscript in the British Museum.

² Westminster Register.

O! with the Duke of Buckingham
And other noble gentlemen,
O! but we had some fine hunting!

has survived into the twentieth century. But the most fitting conclusion to the story of George Villiers is the epitaph that he wrote for himself:

Fortune filled him too full, and he run over.

[This essay forms part of a full-length biographical study of the Duke of Buckingham shortly to be published. Extracts from the Duke of Buckingham's commonplace-book are printed by kind permission of the Earl of Jersey.]

The Young Robert Browning

BY J. M. COHEN

'What I have printed gives no knowledge of me,' wrote the poet to Elizabeth Barrett at the opening of their correspondence—'it evidences abilities of various kinds, if you will . . . that I think. But I never have begun, even, what I hope I was born to begin and end—R.B. a poem.' Browning had, in point of fact, by February 11th, 1845, the day on which this letter was posted, published four 'sadly imperfect demonstrations of even mere ability,' to quote his own denigratory verdict: *Pauline*, *Paracelsus*, *Sordello* and *Pippa Passes*; and each of these marks a stage towards that final achievement which proved in the event so different from the visionary epic—'R.B. a poem.'

'These scenes and song scraps are such mere and very escapes of my inner power, which lives in me like the light in those crazy Mediterranean phares I have watched at sea, [his letter continues], where the light is ever revolving in a dark gallery, bright and alive, and only after a weary interval leaps out, for a moment, from the one narrow chink, and then goes on with the blind wall between it and you.'

The poet was close on thirty-three; the revolutionary vision of the great Romantics had dissolved into the subjective dream-worlds of Darley and Beddoes, into Corn Law rhymes and Chartist battle-songs, fustian epics and saccharine occasional verse; but the most original poet of this new age of prosperity was still speaking with the voice of Shelley, still planning to write the great romantic poem, a successor to the as yet unpublished *Prelude*, to *Alastor*, *Hyperion* and *Childe Harold*. His masterpiece, however, *The Ring and the Book*, and the great dramatic monologues of *Dramatis Personæ* and *Men and Women* proved to be poetry of a very different sort. Signed they were with the great flourish, 'R.B. poet,' yet 'R.B. a poem' never came to be written, and long before 1846 Browning had begun to turn away from romantic egoism to the creation of characters from other lands and times, just as his age was then turning from the extravagance of revolution towards conquest, trade and travel in countries as distant and, superficially,

as picturesque as the Renaissance Italy in which so many of his poems are set.

To trace the stages by which he moved from the extremes of subjectivity to an attitude in which his own problems appear to have yielded entirely before the task of objective story-telling, will not only throw light on the mature Robert Browning, and suggest, perhaps, the reasons for the later exhaustion of his talent ; but it will offer a comment also on the relative longevity of the Victorian artist, and his failure to develop beyond his middle years. For, compared with the giants of previous centuries or with the great of our own days, the poets of the nineteenth century failed to mature into middle age ; while in contrast to their immediate predecessors, many of them lived to an honourable old age in reasonable health and sanity.

Browning's first poem, *Pauline*, is deeply imbued with the sense of sin, and with a pessimism strikingly at odds with the buoyancy of his maturity. The young poet—he was twenty when he wrote it—occupies the centre of the poem, dwarfing his dimly outlined mistress, who gives her name to it, into the insignificance of a mere stage property, whose 'loosened hair and breathing lips and arms . . . build up a screen' to shut him from all fear, when he returns to her at the opening of the poem, loaded with the guilt of nameless sins. The setting is autumn, the verse a weak variant of the measure of *Alastor* or *Endymion*, but unlike its models, it lacks visual imagery. Yet it betrays no foreshadowing of the sense of character, the dramatic speech, or wealth of detail that characterise the later Browning. It is the poetry of mood, and like all Browning's work it is remarkable for a unity of texture, the verse falling and rising in its emotional intensity from derivative flatness and self-pity to the aggressive self-assertion of :

I am made up of an intensest life,
Of a most clear idea of consciousness
Of self, distinct from all its qualities,
From all affections, passions, feelings, powers ; . . .
And to a principle of restlessness
Which would be all, have, see, know, taste, feel, all—
This is myself ; . . .

These strains of restlessness and defeat are strongly contrasted, and they are reconciled only upon a note of generalised hope, so inconclusive that it is impossible to be certain from the poem whether the young poet is intended to have died or survived. '*Pauline* is the one of Mr. Browning's longer poems of which no

intelligible abstract is possible,' wrote his friend and most sensitive biographer, Mrs. Sutherland Orr. One figure, however, does emerge from this inchoate confession, that of Shelley, whose example is invoked in a passage which sheds some light on the mind of the young Browning :

Sun-treader, I believe in God and truth
And love ; and as one just escaped from death
Would bind himself in bands of friends to feel
He lives indeed, so I would lean on thee !

It is in his attitude to the dead poet that Browning gives us the clue to his own malaise. The sin of which he accused himself, in the person of the poet in *Pauline*, was pride or self-will, and the embodiment of these was Shelley, as seen by the young Browning, who echoed his master in such lines as :

as some temple seemed

My soul, where nought is changed and incense rolls
Around the altar, only God is gone
And some dark spirit sitteth in his seat.
So, I passed through the temple and to me
Kneled troops of shadows, and they cried ' Hail, King ! '

It was not the poet of *Pauline*, however, who had pulled God down from his throne. He was at one with his dissenting parents in accepting the Christian ethic, if not the letter of the creed. Nor had he carried through the normal adolescent revolt against their standards and authority. He had, none the less, at the age of fourteen, seized upon ' Mr. Shelley's Atheistical poem,' *Queen Mab*, in a box of second-hand books, and for perhaps as much as two years remained ' a professing atheist and a practising vegetarian,' writes Mrs. Orr. Yet even this seems to have drawn down no parental disapproval. His mother procured for him the rest of Shelley's works, and on the bookseller's recommendation, some volumes of Keats as well. His careful education at home was not interrupted by this juvenile passion. Mr. Browning approved his son's ambition to make poetry a career, and paid for the publication of his poems, except for *Pauline*, which was sponsored by an aunt. The father held a clerkship in the Bank of England, then a lucrative post, but he considered that such work might prove too monotonous for his son ; and though both the law and diplomacy seemed at times possible careers for young Robert, no one seems to have questioned the suitability of the son's living on at his father's expense, first at Camberwell and later at Hatcham, until at the age of thirty-four he made his runaway marriage with Elizabeth

Barrett, his senior by six years and herself the possessor of a moderate income.

Yet though Browning soon forsook his Shelleyan atheism, and adapted himself to the parental standards, there is evidence in *Pauline* that the adjustment was not made without spiritual cost. Shelley was still the symbol for him both of creation itself and of freedom, and looking back on the height of his juvenile intoxication of five years ago, he still remembered with emotion those

words which seemed
A key to a new world, the muttering
Of angels, something yet unguessed by man.

His feeling for Shelley, indeed, was by no means a simple one. Though he could affirm in one line, 'But thou art still to me as thou hast been,' there is another passage which betrays a conflicting standpoint. Here the imagery bears the mark of less intellectual sifting, for in it he compares himself to

a young witch whose blue eyes,
As she stood naked by the river springs,
Drew down a god.

In relation to Shelley his was clearly, to some extent at least, a passively feminine rôle, and in that passage, turgid with unconscious associations, from which I have just quoted, we are given the clearest pointer to the significance of the young Browning's sin of pride. Shelley stood to him for independence and creative power, for rebellion alike against parents, church and society, a rebellion which the young Browning had abandoned, relapsing in the poem on to the comfortable, motherly bosom of the dimly outlined Pauline. He blamed himself, however, for repudiating his master, by which act he had failed to assert his own manhood; and his sense of sin was heightened by the incompleteness of his renunciation, by his urge to self-assertion, the 'principle of restlessness' that remained. The whole poem is pervaded by this self-reproach, and the melancholy of failure is expressed even in the weak cadences of the lines. It is a confession, and an admission of defeat, ending on a confused note in which death and hope remained unresolved.

The poem has sufficient individuality, however, to have aroused Rossetti's interest, when he found a copy in the British Museum library. Despite its anonymous publication he had no difficulty in recognising it for Browning's. Yet the poet himself always disliked it, and would have suppressed it if he could. Its anonymity, preserved even for its publisher, suggests an immediate disavowal,

and five years after its publication he was already describing it as 'the only remaining crab of the shapely Tree of Life in my Fool's Paradise.' But Browning remained the poorer by his refusal to acknowledge the moral crisis from which the poem arose, and by his failure to achieve independence. 'The fact was, poor boy,' his sister wrote, 'he had outgrown his social surroundings. They were absolutely good, but they were narrow; it could not be otherwise, he chafed under them.'

In the end he succeeded in maintaining his admiration for Shelley by explaining away both the elder poet's atheism and his social rebellion, as is clear from his introduction to some spurious Shelley letters published in 1851. 'Had Shelley lived,' he wrote, 'he would have finally ranged himself with the Christians'; and he argued further that the preliminary step to following Christ is to leave the dead to bury their dead, and not to clamour on his doctrine for an especial solution of difficulties which are referable to the general problem of the universe—in this way rejecting also Shelley's political enthusiasms. 'Nor will men persist,' he asserts, 'in confounding with genuine infidelity and an atheism of the heart, those passionate, impatient struggles of a boy towards distant truth and love, made in the dark . . .' Which conclusion was no doubt satisfactory to Browning's peace of mind, and helped him to adapt himself to a non-revolutionary age, but it is indicative of a failure that eventually withered his creative powers.

The central figure of *Paracelsus* partakes both of Faust and Prometheus; the poem is a study in the romantic sin of intellectual pride. But, though boldly planned, it is deficient in dramatic development, and Paracelsus's fall lacks all elements of tragedy. Less mawkish than *Pauline*, the poem has also less emotional tension; the conception is too patently an intellectual one. The Paracelsus of history, a mysterious contemporary of Luther's, was a figure, part philosopher, part occultist, part surgeon and physician, whose writings are obscured for the modern reader by that alchemical symbolism which so often masks Boehme's meanings also. A forerunner of Swedenborg on the one hand, Paracelsus was also a pioneer of medicine, being the first to use laudanum for the relief of pain. Leaving behind him an unsavoury reputation for black magic, he naturally attracted the occultist circles of early nineteenth-century Paris, whose speculations influenced the writers of their time, especially Balzac.

It was a French friend, the royalist exile Amédée de Ripert-Monclar, who suggested the subject to Browning, and to him the poem was dedicated. But this was not the poet's first introduction

to the occultists, for the motto of *Pauline* is drawn from the Latin writings of another legendary magician, Cornelius Agrippa. Ideas of the supernatural, however, repelled Browning, and in his historical note on the poem he drew chiefly on the hostile account of Paracelsus given by his enemy Thomas Erastus. It is interesting in this connection to speculate whether his dislike of spiritualism, which exercised a great attraction for Mrs. Browning, was not connected with his early acquaintance with the occultist writers. Perhaps *Mr. Sludge* 'The Medium' had some such germ. Still, the Paracelsus of the poem is not the egregious quack of the notes: one who 'scarcely ever ascended the lecture desk unless half drunk,' a man 'displaying an ignorance of the rudiments of the most ordinary knowledge,' yet 'practising the different operations of magic and alchemy.' Browning's Paracelsus and Thomas Erastus's travesty have, all the same, one common characteristic: they share that sin of pride, for which Browning continued to reproach himself. He had by now made friends with two young lawyers, Alfred Domett—the Waring of the poem—and Joseph Arnould; yet he seems to have remained intellectually isolated and to have found social intercourse difficult, since even as late as 1840 he wrote to Domett on the subject of *Sordello*, 'the fact is I live by myself, write with no better company, and forget that the *lovers* you mention'—the characters in the poem—are part and parcel of that self, and their choosing to comprehend my comprehensions but an indifferent testimony to their value' . . .

Paracelsus is the product of this aloofness, but, unlike *Pauline*, it is not a monologue. The poet Aprile, one of the three supporting characters, speaks with an individual voice; and as the counterpart of the protagonist, ardent explorer of the world of abstract thought, 'A being knowing not what love is,' he is consumed by a creative passion. Now the key to *Paracelsus* lies in that Promethean motive which led to the hero's final overthrow:

I seemed to long
At once to trample on and save mankind,
To make some unexampled sacrifice
In their behalf, to wring some wondrous good
From heaven or earth for them, to perish, winning
Eternal weal in the act . . .
Yet never to be mixed with men so much
As to have part even in my own work, share
In my own largess . . .

Against this attitude of contemptuous benevolence Festus, Michal and Aprile all stand for the power of love; and it is from Aprile's

example that Paracelsus recognises his own arrogant error. Yet the poet who 'would love infinitely and be loved' is no nearer a final achievement than 'he that aspired to know'; and searching, as he dies, for the reason of his failure, he ascribes it to impatience, a fault the antithesis of the philosopher's, in these self-accusing lines:

I could not curb
My yearnings to possess at once the full
Enjoyment, but neglected all the means
Of realising even the frailest joy, . . .

To the young Browning creation and love of his fellow men stood on one side, the scientific pursuit of knowledge on the other; and neither alone was sufficient. It is only after his acknowledgement of this truth, moreover, that Paracelsus can claim, at the end of the second part of the poem, 'I have attained, and now I may depart.' In the sacrifice of the poet there appears to be redemption for the philosopher. The same conclusion is stressed once more at the end of the poem, when Paracelsus himself is dying and in his death attains once more, in his last words not only bringing the poem to its resolution, but adumbrating the course that Browning was to embark on in his maturity.

Let men

Regard me, and the poet dead long ago
Who loved too rashly; and shape forth a third
And better tempered spirit, warned by both.
As from the over radiant star too mad
To drink the life-springs, beamless thence itself—
And the dark orb which borders the abyss,
Ingulfed in icy night—might have its course
A temperate and equidistant world.

This world, when Browning came to create it, was the world of *Men and Women*, *Dramatis Personæ* and *The Ring and the Book*, temperate through the poet's tolerant and loving advocacy of this world's compromisers, its half-poets, its half-sensualists, its half-divines and its half-charlatans. For himself, however, the inability to love remained to be recorded in a letter to Elizabeth Barrett in 1846. A little put out by his expressed willingness to 'serve her,' should her reason for holding him off be some preference of hers for another, she had expostulated rather sharply that this offer might be 'generous in you—but in *me*, where were the integrity?' But for her health, she assured him, she would accept the great trust with which he honoured her; which direct statement drew from Browning a most revealing reply: . . . 'being no longer in the

first freshness of life'—he was thirty-four—'and having for many years now made up my mind to the impossibility of loving any woman . . . having wondered at this in the beginning, and fought not a little against it, having acquiesced in it at last, and accounted for it all to myself, and become if anything, rather proud of it than sorry' . . . he claims that he had till then 'a mind set in ultimate order, so I fancied, for the few years more.' Allowing for the hyperbole of a love-letter, this still appears a curious state of mind for an attractive and, by now, sociable man of letters.

The Paracelsus in him was far from written out in the creation of that poem, and *Sordello* is another confession of failure, this time of failure to translate dream into action. In the course of the whole tale the poet Sordello emerges only twice from his subjective world: once when, almost by chance, he caps the song of the troubadour Eglamor with a song of his own on the same theme—'the true lay with the true end,' and the second time when, revealed a prince, he rejects a political compromise and dies in the mental anguish of making his decision. The stress of the poem, Browning declared in a later preface to it, was 'on the incidents in the development of a soul, little else being worth the study'; which last is as well, for the detail of the poem is most obscure, partly owing to a too great allusiveness, and partly because of the abrupt transitions in the narrative. But in one way *Sordello* is an advance on the more diffuse and straightforward *Paracelsus*. Eglamor, the poetic craftsman, talented but uninspired, Naddo the critic, and Salinguerra, the Renaissance chieftain who proves to be Sordello's father, are round characters foreshadowing the great figures in *Men and Women*. The Italian background too is revealed in flashes of lovely detail, more clearly defined than the generalised landscape which occasionally leaps into being behind the larger-than-life figure of *Paracelsus*, though the rich interiors still owe a great deal to the Keats of *The Eve of St. Agnes*, as does Sordello himself, 'a soul fit to receive Delight at every sense.'

In contrast to *Paracelsus*, who would give without loving, Sordello can find no object to enrich with his love, and so turns inward or lapses into a perfectionist desire to

display completely here

The mastery another life should learn,
Thrusting in time eternity's concern,—

The comparison with Eglamor, the poetic craftsman whom he vanquishes, is by no means entirely to Sordello's advantage, and there is an interesting parallel between the troubadour,

no genius rare
 Transfiguring in fire or wave or air
 At will, but a poor gnome that, cloistered up
 In some rock chamber with his agate cup,
 His topaz rod, his seed pearl, in these few
 And their arrangement finds enough to do
 For his best art . . .

and the poet of *The Ring and the Book*, deliberately choosing a restricted theme to perfect from every viewpoint.

Now whilst in Eglamor, the workaday poet, Browning looked forward to the poetic craftsman that in his maturity he was to become, in Salinguerra he created also the compromising Renaissance man of action, who represented to him the antithesis of the rigidly idealist Victorian man of letters. The poem itself was largely written before the poet's first visit to Italy, the impressions of which are more deeply stamped on *Pippa Passes*; but it is no exaggeration to say that the imaginary thirteenth-century background of *Sordello* is as real as the observed nineteenth-century detail of the later poem. How deeply significant the creation of *Sordello*'s world was for Browning may be deduced from the fact that it is here that his first profoundly individual writing appears, in lines where the exact eye of a Crabbe, the emotional force of Shelley, and a compact reasoning akin to Shakespeare's combine to form something new in English poetry. It is hard to substantiate this claim by the choice of a short passage, and it is only in flashes that poetry emerges from the poem's packed and turgid detail; but if a few lines must serve for example, let it be a description early in the second book:

wide
 Opened the great morass, shot every side
 With flashing water through and through; a-shine,
 Thick-steaming, all-alive. Whose shape divine,
 Quivered i' the farthest rainbow-vapour, glanced
 Athwart the flying herons? He advanced,
 But warily; though Mincio leaped no more,
 Each footfall burst up in the marish-floor
 A diamond jet . . .

Here are the beginnings of an original style, and elsewhere in the poem are the first adumbrations of Browning's characteristic irony.

But the poem is inextricably difficult, a clear proof of the poet's statement to Domett already quoted, that he lived by himself. In *Pauline* and *Paracelsus* too diffuse, he is said to have condensed *Sordello* under the impact of some comments by John Sterling

repeated to him with additions by one young lady, who had heard them from another. Be that as it may, the undue obscurity of the poem suggests a desire to shock his reader, or even some unconscious necessity not to make himself quite plain. Writing of society to Elizabeth Barrett, he remarks: 'For me, I always hated it—have put up with it these six or seven years past, lest by foregoing it I should let some unknown god escape me.' But by the time he came to write this letter he was anxious to make the poem more readable, and proposed to add some 10 per cent. additional verses. She, however, wanted him to draw it together and fortify the connections and associations, but in the end nothing was done. In his 1863 dedication he excused his faults of expression, and claimed that he had written it only for a few. Yet it would be difficult, in view of the many obscurities in his later work, to acquit him of at least an equivocal attitude towards the reader, of something in excess of that certain peremptoriness which was always present in his work. For what qualities, I wonder, did he admire Donne, a poet out of fashion, whose intellectual subtleties were so very far from his own, if it was not for the earlier poet's seemingly truculent refusal to write simply? And Quarles, too, an early favourite with Browning, must have had a similar relevance for him.

Now if his English public was to be distrusted and set at defiance, it was in the Italians that he found all the virtues which his fellow-countrymen lacked. Homesickness for England has never been better expressed than in *Home Thoughts from Abroad*, written on his first journey to Italy; yet in *Pippa Passes*, the product of that earliest acquaintance with the country that was to be his home for all his married years, the only English character is the shabby police informer, Bluphocks. The poems written in England are redolent of guilt and failure, only mitigated by some undefined hope of redemption in another world; but in Italy Browning found innocence, and his Italian characters walk firmly with their feet on the ground and their heads in the air, rejoicing in each new day. If *Pauline* is the poem of a northern autumn, the setting of *Pippa* is the Italian spring; and where the earlier poems dwell on self-conscious endeavours to match the gods in creation, Pippa's achievement is simple, perfect and unselfconscious. An amusing sidelight on Browning's love of the common people of Italy is thrown by his elaborate proof to Elizabeth that Fra Angelico was in fact just a bon-bourgeois. 'Italy,' he stated in another letter, 'is stuff for the use of the North, and no more,' and he went on to decry the Italian poets, Dante even; but to him the Italian background was something more than local colouring. Italy stood to him for a release

from the guilty oppression which had weighed down his youth, for a country where poetic craftsmanship was consonant with the family virtues, where the poet was not confronted with the choice between the comforts of the parental home and the intractable atheism of creation, represented by Shelley, who had himself found release in Italy.

'That little peasant's voice,' breaking in on her one day of holiday, persuades Ottima's lover Sebald to pay the price of his crime, the murder of her husband; prompts the sculptor Jules to accept the bride who has been foisted on him in joke; recalls the patriot Luigi to his duty, and awakes the unscrupulous prelate, Monsignor, to the wickedness of the plot which the intendant is proposing to him, to sell Pippa to her death in the brothels of Rome: for unknown to herself, she is the daughter of the priest's elder brother, and, as such, heiress to some villas Monsignor expects to revert to him. The plan of the poem is modest and well balanced, and redeemed from sentimentality by Pippa's ironic conviction that the four principle characters are 'Asolo's Four Happiest Ones,' Ottima and Sebald the closest of lovers, Jules and Phene happy on their marriage-day, Luigi and his mother content, and Monsignor—

—whom they expect from Rome
To visit Asolo, his brother's home,
And say here masses proper to release
A soul from pain—What storm dares hurt his peace?

As for Pippa herself, on her holiday,

What shall I please today?
My morn, noon, eve and night—how spend my day?
Tomorrow I must be Pippa who winds silk,
The whole year round, to earn just bread and milk:
But, this one day, I have leave to go
And play out my fancy's fullest games;
I may fancy all day—and it shall be so—
That I taste of the pleasures, am called by the names
Of the Happiest Four in Asolo!

Now it was by Pippa's example, by an assumption of innocence and by living the life of each of his characters in turn, that Browning became a poet of individual achievement. Pippa was his first completely successful creation, and it was her poem that set him on the true path of his genius. In the plays that he was writing at the same time he was unsuccessful; they lack dramatic tension, and the

voices of the characters are never sufficiently individualised. But in his monologues, each devoted to a single personage, Browning frees himself from the compulsion to justify himself, by justifying them; and he is consequently able to present that tolerant, compromising crew, subtle in expression yet direct in action, that are associated for him with the warmth and colour of southern lands. The south brought him a relief from the burden of his conscience, and in his marriage, the whole of which passed in Italy, he was able to love deeply and completely. So, despite his desire even as late as 1846 to write 'R.B. a poem,' the heart-searchings that are reflected in *Pauline*, *Paracelsus* and *Sordello* seemed to be ceasing; perhaps they had begun to do so even before he met Elizabeth Barrett. For the Robert Browning that we know best appears to be the most objective of all poets, never speaking in the first person except to voice some generalised sentiment of the nature of *Home Thoughts from the Sea*. The very embodiment of the poetic craftsman, he can match his wares with the most highly wrought and finished products of the age of prosperity. A mild radical of few prejudices, he preaches the broadest of creeds, for 'Why must a single of the sides be right?' Yet he must have paid dearly for laying aside the prophetic mantle of *Sordello* and taking up the craftsman's tools of a more inspired Eglamor, even though the age of the poet-prophet was done. In turning away from the problems of self-examination that he had taken up in the early poems, he left his juvenile malaise still unresolved, and it was probably for this reason that he became divorced in his later life from the springs of his inspiration, which lay in just those regions of his mind from which he had, since *Pippa*, averted his gaze.

A secondary feature in Browning's writing which requires examination is that vein of perversity, apparent always in his deliberate teasing of his reader, and most palpably revealed in such a piece as *The Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister*. Here savage and cunning hatred is expressed with safety through the mouth of a fictitious character. But more positive proof of the violence that lay in the poet's mind, only just below the ceremonial orderliness of his public presence, can be found in *Childe Roland*, and in a more disguised form in *The Flight of the Duchess*. The first of these, a contemporary poet and critic, John Heath Stubbs, describes as 'a pure exercise in the horrible.' So dreamlike and so disjointed, it suggests an allegory of uncertain meaning, though the poet claimed that it was no more than a romantic tale inspired by a line from *King Lear*. What is most remarkable about it, however, is its macabre and brutal imagery.

As for the grass, it grew as scant as hair
 In leprosy ; thin dry blades pricked the mud
 Which underneath looked kneaded up with blood.
 One stiff blind horse, his every bone astare,
 Stood stupefied, however he came there :
 Thrust out past service from the Devil's stud !

Alive ? he might be dead for aught I know,
 With that red gaunt and colloped neck a-strain,
 And shut eyes underneath the rusty mane ;
 Seldom went such grotesqueness with such woe ;
 I never saw a beast I hated so ;
 He must be wicked to deserve such pain.

It is in this ghastly Rocinante of the knacker's yard, in the ' crime passionelle ' of *Porphyria's Lover*, and the lurid *Heretic's Tragedy* that one sees the obverse side of Browning's buoyant optimism, his humanity and his many-sided advocacy of his picturesque worldlings. In his finest poems, too, rich in subtle and dramatic argument, which displays character even though it achieves no profundity, there are such unexpected outcroppings of cruelty as the destructive irony of Blougram's condemnation of his interviewer, Gigadibs, the horseplay of *Holy Cross Day*, or the brutishness of *Caliban upon Setebos*. For never far distant from Robert Browning's consciousness lay always a nightmare world, the legacy of the self-reproach first adumbrated in *Pauline* and thrust aside after *Pippa Passes* by the objective poet that he became. The obscene purgatory of *Childe Roland* was prepared long before for the sinful youth of *Pauline*.

The nineteenth-century poet's was an unenviable lot. Born into an age when religious faith had yielded to mere conformism, many were tempted to assume the rôle of prophet. Finding their inspiration, however, in no revealed teaching, they looked into the depths of their own hearts for an oracle and a mythology, and exalted their perceptions during moments of the highest emotional excitement into a vision of objective truth. The dangers of this presumption, forced on them by the lack of accepted spiritual standards, were greatest in those countries which were deficient in cultural as well as religious tradition ; and if the incidence of early death, madness, neurotic disorder and premature exhaustion of inspiration was considerable among the English Romantics, it was even heavier among the Germans. But there were few poets in any land whose work showed the steady development and deepening experience, which are proper to the well-balanced man. Keats

only, consciously following Shakespeare, seemed to be moving towards a knowledge which might have remained rich throughout his life, had he lived; but of the rest, Blake, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley, Beddoes, de Nerval, Kleist, Hölderlin, Lenau, Pushkin, Lermontov—and how many lesser men—not one survived to write the poetry of maturity. The best of nineteenth-century poets, indeed, are seldom free from an adolescent fervour, an immature self-dramatisation absolutely foreign to such adult figures as Dante, Spenser or Milton. Their view of the world is too often coloured by a single emotional attitude, a recurrent mood, being founded on no broad vision of the universe. The most perfect of them, Baudelaire and Hopkins, were able to see the repeated patterns of such emotions clearly, to separate them from the backwash of regret and yearning, desire and disappointment, which belong with immaturity: their work, to quote Heath Stubbs once more, was never horrible, though often terrible. They frighten us by revealing the frightening depths of man's servility to matter, but by rejecting the temptation to prophecy, by restricting themselves to a few experiences deeply felt and understood, they avoided the Icarian fall of Blake, Shelley, and Hölderlin. Browning, standing at the watershed between the generations of Shelley and Hopkins, alone among the English Romantics almost succeeded in solving the romantic dilemma. For, as I have tried to show, after *Paracelsus* and *Sordello* he renounced Shelley's example, and turned outwards. The reality, he seems to have assumed, was not to be found by self-examination, but through the elaboration of characters, each of whom was made to plead his own case by the subtlest of lawyer's advocacy and to justify, as in *The Ring and The Book*, his own point of view. But by no amount of casuistry was Browning able to acquit himself of his own weight of guilt. In looking outward before he had comprehended and come to terms with his sense of sin, he cut himself off from the roots of his inspiration and perpetuated a division in himself which eventually robbed him of his true growth. His later poems are repetitions of the earlier, with the idiosyncracies more pronounced and the dramatic presentation weaker. They are the products of a man who failed to outlive his thirties; for despite all his intellectual elaborations he never learnt to think economically and to a purpose.

Along the line, however, by which Browning tried in vain to reconcile his cleft nature, Goethe had already moved half a century before to achieve a far greater measure of integration. Warned by the tragic fate of many of his Sturm und Drang contemporaries, he too renounced the temptation to write out of the depths of his

emotional experience, and in creating Werther projected the perils of romantic infatuation upon an imaginary character, into whom he certainly incorporated a great deal of his own early experience. For his adolescent love-affairs cannot have had the idyllic quality that he later ascribed to them in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, or they would not have ended, one and all, in compulsive partings. Goethe's failure to visit his mother in her last years shows, perhaps, a repellent heartlessness; Browning's intimate attachment to his parents throughout their lives is naturally a great deal more endearing; yet there is a viewpoint from which Goethe's severance of what must have been a too constricting bond was a great deal more salutary than Browning's more appealing and filial behaviour. Goethe was a man of far less sympathetic qualities; but, alone of nineteenth-century poets, he succeeded in purging himself of romantic unbalance, sufficiently indeed to present it detachedly many years later in *Die Wahlverwandschaften*. So curiously formal is that novel, with its almost Jamesian flavour, so deliberately limited to the presentation of 'a case,' that we might be pardoned for forgetting that Goethe had himself once been actuated by the perverse emotionalism of his characters. But he too reveals at times an unconscious disorder beneath the well-cultivated greatness of his public self. For him the characters of Mignon and the Harper, and the masonic mystifications at the end of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* bear an emotional supercharge comparable with the force that loads the confused and involuntarily brutal symbolism of *Childe Roland*. Goethe, too, paid for the perfecting of his outward personality by a too frequent divorce from the sources of his inspiration. But thanks in part to the motive of *Beschränkung*—limitation—which pervades his writings, his achievement was greater than Browning's, and his work continued to mature throughout his life. Perhaps the English poet's dissenting conscience was more difficult to silence than more worldly eighteenth-century moral promptings inherited from the smugly prosperous of Frankfurt; for Browning always asserted the essential rightness of the world rather too vociferously to convince us now, with our prying psychological penetration, that he was not in fact speaking loud to quiet his doubts.

The Saracen's Head

or The Reluctant Crusader

BY OSBERT LANCASTER

[FOR CARA AND WILLIAM]

[William de Littlehampton, pitched into the Third Crusade by a domineering mother, had, owing to the luck of the draw, been matched with a formidable Moslem record-holder, the conqueror of two of the most celebrated Christian champions. Thanks entirely to that lack of concentration and natural clumsiness which had rendered him a byword in sporting circles throughout his youth, William had overthrown the Paynim with a single blow. His reputation thus suddenly redeemed, he finds himself on an equal footing with his fellow Crusaders in whose company he sets out to join his Sovereign at the siege of Acre.]

PART TWO



THE next day was very hot, and as the sun mounted higher in the sky, the Crusaders grew redder and damper, and many complaints arose, especially from the fatter knights, about having to wear armour. But the Baron was very firm and refused for a moment to consider withdrawing his orders. 'You are all on active service now, not just going to a tournament,' he said. 'Besides,' he added, 'this is not

really hot—you should have been on the second Crusade. Now that really *was* hot! I remember once in the desert the sun was so powerful that I fried an egg on my helmet. The trouble is you young fellows don't know what real heat is.'

William, who had passed his whole life at Courantsdair, was in no position to contradict and, anyhow, being quite thin he was not suffering unduly. Poor Lillian, however, was in a dreadful state and felt very envious of those horses that were wearing long linen surcoats, tastefully embroidered with their master's arms. William, therefore, determined to have one of these coats, which he much admired, as soon as they reached the camp. Hitherto he had felt that were he at once to adopt this fashion, which he noted was confined to the smarter and more experienced knights, he might be considered to be rather bumpitious and guilty of a

desire to show off, but since the events of yesterday he felt his position among his companions was now sufficiently well established to enable him to do so without arousing any adverse comment.

Shortly after midday the leading knights saw, away in the distance between a gap in the low hills, a patch of brilliantly blue sea and within an hour they were in view of the towers and walls of Acre with the innumerable tents that sheltered the allied armies drawn up in a vast half circle in the foreground.

As soon as they had passed the first outposts the scene was one of the utmost liveliness and bustle, and Sir William would indeed have been hopelessly confused and at a loss to understand the significance of half that met his eyes had it not been for the companionship of Sir Cuthbert de Brett who was riding alongside him. This amiable and well-informed young knight was counted the best amateur herald of his generation, and proved a mine of interesting and detailed information.

'Why look, dear boy,' he said, pointing to a large banner flapping above a tent on the left, 'there are the three rognons braisés on a ground argent of Salamandre de Vichy-Celestins. He, you know, is one of the richest lords in France and owns the best fishing in all Aquitaine. And next door I see the impaled turbot proper of Bobo Sissinghurst, one of the Derbyshire Sissinghursts and uncle by marriage of poor Gatters. And, there, I do believe are the quartered pelicans of Alfredo Frangipani; he, you realise, is Duke of Acqua-Pellgerino and possesses immense estates in Calabria and is directly descended from Romulus' wolf. Oddly enough,' he added in a casual voice, 'he is a connection of mine on his mother's side.'

Sir William, who had never been very good at heraldry, was profoundly grateful for all this valuable information, although the thought of the distinction and grandeur of so many of these names made him feel increasingly nervous. Sir Cuthbert, on the other hand, seemed to find the atmosphere positively exhilarating and kept on repeating in tones of the greatest satisfaction and surprise, 'My dear, the whole world seems to be here.'

The Baron of Barking-West, after many enquiries from friends and acquaintances, at last succeeded in finding the billeting officer and, after a considerable delay during which this worthy fellow read through a long list three times, then decided it was the wrong one, sent for another and finally found what he wanted in the first, they were directed, just as the sun was setting, to the quarters they were to occupy for the night.

Quite early next morning, before indeed William had finished

dressing, he was surprised to receive a visit from the Baron carrying a large parcel done up in a damp cloth.

'Well,' said his visitor with some satisfaction, 'I've fixed it. His Majesty, whom news of your remarkable exploit had already reached, has graciously expressed his wish to make your acquaintance and I am to present you to him at this morning's levée which is due to take place in half an hour.'

At first William was too overcome to reply, and busied himself with finishing his toilet and asking Leofric to give his helmet an extra polish and put out a clean surcoat. When at last he had got over his surprise, he hastily enquired what he was expected to do, how he should address his sovereign and, particularly, what was in the large parcel.

'Ah, yes, indeed,' said the Baron, 'that's a small present for you to give His Majesty. It is always as well on these occasions to have some trifling little memento to offer. And this, I flatter myself, will be much appreciated.' Whereupon, winking broadly, he whisked off the cloth revealing to the horrified William the severed head of Almanazor-El-Babooni!

'Yes,' continued the Baron, 'I had it cut off yesterday with just this purpose in mind. I think you'll find that it will give much pleasure to the Monarch.'

William, who had not regarded the face of El Babooni as a thing of beauty during his lifetime and considered that little or no improvement had been effected by death, thought it highly improbable that this grisly relic could give much pleasure to anyone, but could only suppose the Baron knew best.

By the time the Baron and William had arrived at the space in front of the royal tent where the levée was to be held, a large crowd had already assembled. Thanks, however, to the energy of the Baron and the fact that he had a friend in the Lord Chamberlain's office, they were given very good places in the queue and settled down to wait patiently until their sovereign should emerge.

Exactly on the stroke of ten, with a punctuality which has ever distinguished our Royal House, the trumpets sounded, the guards presented arms, unseen hands whisked apart the flaps of the tent, and His Majesty, King Richard, accompanied by a numerous retinue of chamberlains, secretaries, chaplains, allied commanders and others, advanced to take his seat on the throne which had been placed on a dais opposite the head of the queue. His sovereign's countenance struck William as noble and benign: the blue if slightly prominent eyes formed a pleasing contrast to the red



of the beard and hair and the expression was condescending but affable. A rather less pleasing impression, however, was created by the appearance of His Majesty's attendants. William was an idealistic young man and found it hard altogether to suppress a feeling of disappointment on his first sight of so many figures prominent in public life. In those days, you must remember, there were no photographs or newspapers to render familiar the likenesses of the leading statesmen of the time, and were you suddenly to be confronted today with the whole Cabinet and the more important permanent civil servants, having received no previous hint of their appearance, you would doubtless be no less shocked than was poor William on this occasion.

But little time was left for reflection on these matters, for William had hardly recovered from his surprise when he found himself at the head of the queue being urged forward by the Baron. As he sank down on one knee, eyes fixed on the ground, he heard the chamberlain read out his name and titles, and those of the Baron, which was followed by a short silence broken finally by a thunderous rasping sound that he did not at once realise was his Sovereign clearing his throat. This over, he heard the royal voice, more kindly but hardly less forceful than that of the Dame of Courants-dair, addressing him in the warmest manner.

'William de Littlehampton, We are doubly pleased to welcome you among us today. First as your father's son ; for the late Sir—, the late Sir—, um, the late—' at this point William noticed an anxious face pop over the top of the throne and whisper hurriedly in the royal ear '—the late Sir Dagobert was among Our Royal Father's most trusted lieges. Second, We welcome you in your own right as one who has accomplished a notable feat of arms, gaining great credit for yourself and affording much assistance to the Holy Cause we are all sworn to defend. Some time We would much like to hear from your own lips a full account of your prowess in yesterday's engagement. Now, alas, affairs of state are pressing. However, We cannot take Our leave of so gallant a knight without bestowing some signal mark of Our favour.'

At this a page came forward with a pair of beautiful golden spurs on a cushion which His Majesty took and, with that gracious condescension which had done so much to endear him to all ranks of his subjects, himself fixed on the feet of the trembling William. Then, taking the immense sword which rested across his knees, he tapped William lightly on the shoulder and said in ringing tones : ' Rise, Sir William.'

So overcome was our hero at this totally unexpected gesture



that he would undoubtedly have forgotten to present his own gift had the Baron not jabbed him sharply in the ribs. Blushing furiously, and doing his best to conceal both his distaste for the present and his anxiety as to its reception, he mumbled some quite inaudible words of gratitude and loyalty and laid the bundle at the King's feet.

Sir William need have had no fear for the reaction his gift was to produce, for no sooner had he removed the cloth than a murmur of the most genuine appreciation arose on all sides and there at once appeared in the Royal Eye a look of animation which had up to that moment been quite lacking. Many remarks highly flattering to William's pride and sadly critical of El-Babooni's appearance, were passed by those present, and when the relic was removed by an attendant His Majesty gave instructions that it was to be carefully stuffed and mounted and sent back to hang with other remarkable trophies of the chase in the great hall at Windsor.

'Your thoughtful gesture,' said the Monarch, 'in presenting Us with this splendid memento of a notable action has deeply touched Us, and as a small token of Our gratitude, We command that you shall have the honour of carrying Our Royal Standard in the great attack which is to be launched tomorrow. Moreover, We graciously permit you under Our Royal Warrant from henceforth to bear as your badge, crest and ensign a severed Saracen's head proper, and to transmit the same to all your descendants in the male line from generation to generation.'

Thus saying the King rose, indicating that the levée was now

at an end, and followed by all his attendants withdrew into his tent.

Sir William was deeply touched by all these marks of the Royal Favour. His golden spurs clinked in a most gratifying fashion and attracted much favourable comment from all his companions, and the thought of at last being able to get rid of Sir Dagobert's old boar's-head on his coat of arms which had throughout his youth proved for him a badge of humiliation, and to replace it with this far more dashing and exotic device, gave him boundless pleasure. The consideration of how much it would annoy his mother did not, I am sorry to say, in any way lessen his satisfaction. With regard to the honourable and eagerly sought-after post of Royal Standard Bearer he was less certain. His responsibilities he realised would be very heavy and he was anxious lest Lillian should prove unable to keep up with the Royal Charger, for he understood it to be his privilege always to be within five paces of the Monarch throughout the day. Moreover, he was distressed by the fear that his sudden elevation to this important post might provoke the jealousy of the previous Standard Bearer whom he did not doubt to be one of the immensely distinguished characters of whom Sir Cuthbert had spoken. So seriously did he consider this possibility that he confided his fears later that day to Sir Cuthbert himself.

'My dear boy, you can set your mind at rest on that score,' de Brett assured him, 'for there is at present no Royal Standard Bearer. The last man to hold the post was poor Odo de Basingstoke who was killed last Saturday, his first day in office. Before that there was the Etienne du Chemin-de-Fer-du-Nord, who died on the previous Wednesday, having taken over from Wolfgang von der Bummelzug but three days earlier.'

'Oh,' said William in a rather depressed tone of voice, and what happened to Wolfgang von der what d'you call him?'

'He, poor fellow, was laid low by a bow shot right at the end of the engagement. That was the day when there were no less than three different standard bearers in the twenty-four hours, a record for the whole campaign.'

As William lay awake that night brooding on his conversation with Sir Cuthbert, he came to realise for the first time that one of the great drawbacks of a noble reputation is the strain of keeping it up.

Dawn was still but a faint pinkish glow in the east when William, who had slept very badly, was aroused by sounds of immense activity throughout the camp. Complicated trumpet calls rang out on all sides; the noise of riveting and swearing in half a dozen languages

filled the air as hundreds of knights were assisted into their armour ; and the ground shook beneath the pawing and trampling of as many chargers being exercised by grooms and pages. Poor William who seldom felt at his best at this hour of the day, grew increasingly depressed and the eager chatter of Leofric, who was bustling round here, there and everywhere, did little to cheer him. Only from the freshly painted Saracen's Head, glowering from his shield, did he gain any comfort.

Arrived at the Royal Tent, William found what appeared to be the utmost confusion reigning. Galloping young staff officers kept leaping on and off horses and dashing away on unspecified errands. Pages and armourers shot in and out with helmets, battle-axes, shields and all sorts of equipment, and no-one seemed to have either the leisure or the inclination to tell Sir William where to go or what exactly to do. Accordingly he dismounted, giving his reins to Leofric and remained respectfully as near the door of the tent as he could get—a position in which he caused the maximum inconvenience to everyone.

At last, just as the first rays of the sun shot above the low horizon, a final flurry of staff officers dashed out to announce the immediate appearance of His Majesty and a few seconds later the King himself emerged.

Clad in full armour, though modestly wearing on his surcoat the plain scarlet cross of the Crusader, King Richard having smiled graciously on William, vaulted lightly on to his immense charger that was completely enshrouded in a scarlet saddle-cloth embroidered all over with the royal leopards. Whereupon one nobleman dashed forward to hand him his sword and shield, another lifted up his great helm topped by the Crown of England, while a third thrust into the hands of William, who had only just managed to get mounted in time, the Royal Standard.

Puzzled, still uncertain what to do, and dreadfully apprehensive, poor William was delighted suddenly to notice among the crowd the familiar features of the Baron of Barking West.

'Well, my boy,' said the latter, 'good luck, and God be with you. You know what you have to do? Never let the King out of your sight for one moment and never fall more than five paces behind! Don't worry about killing Moslems; the other fellows will do that all right. All you have to do is to keep the flag flying. Goodbye and good luck.'

On that historic day the English contingent, with their Sovereign at their head, occupied the very centre of the Allied line, and even William, nervous as he was, felt his heart beat faster with pride



as his eye travelled over the long rows of horsemen, the pennons of their lances stirring gently in the early morning breeze, and the sun gleaming and flashing from their helms and weapons. Immediately in front lay the walls and towers of Acre, but between them and the ramparts was already drawn up the main body of the Saracen host. After an extended study of their position King Richard turned to his trumpeter who blew a long warning blast on his horn that was re-echoed by trumpeters all through the army and, standing in his stirrups, raised aloft his great sword. After what seemed to William an age, but can only have been a few seconds, he waved it three times round his head, the trumpets sounded once more and the whole line moved forward at a brisk trot.

It was not long before the King himself had drawn slightly ahead of the line and when the pace increased from a trot to a canter and then to a gallop this distance steadily increased. Poor Lillian who had no great turn for speed was hard pressed, but seemed fully to realise her great responsibility and, puffing but indomitable, succeeded in keeping the regulation five paces behind. William, recalling the fact that, encumbered with the great standard, he would have to look to others for his defence, felt this isolation from the main body very keenly. However, he had little time for such

sombre reflections before he found himself, as it were in a flash, in the midst of the tumult. One moment the ferocious Moslem soldiery seemed to be a good quarter of a mile ahead ; the next they were all around him and on every side.

Of all the fearful details of that heroic day Sir William could later recall but few. Nobly, but only with difficulty, following his Sovereign he was throughout in the very thick of the fighting. Swords and battleaxes rose and fell, heads and limbs rolled on the ground, lances shivered and arrows whizzed all around him. Twice an arrow pierced his surcoat, and no less than twelve found their mark on his bright new shield. Poor Lillian's energies began to flag half-way through, but fortunately an arrow in the rump livened her up in an astonishing degree. At last quite suddenly



they found themselves at the foot of the walls and all the great host, which a short time before had been drawn up below, had vanished away leaving a trail of dead and wounded behind them. Whereupon the King, regardless of the arrows and stones which were still whistling down from the battlements, gave the order to dismount and called in a loud voice for scaling ladders. As soon as these had been set against the walls he advanced briskly to the nearest, closely followed by William, and started to mount.

While the Royal Foot was yet on the lower rungs a terrible thing happened. William, in his fear of being left behind, dashed heedlessly forward, slipped in a pool of blood, and fell flat on his back. At that very moment there leapt from the ground, where he had been feigning death in the hope of just such a chance as William's mishap now offered, a repellent Arab clutching a long knife which he raised, snarling with savage glee, high above the

prostrate Standard Bearer. William had given himself up for lost and was fumbling desperately for his shield, on which in fact he was sitting, when suddenly there was a growl and a dirty yellow flash, and Charlemagne, tailless but unhesitating, flung himself at the Infidel's throat. Regretfully, but knowing well his duty, William scrambled to his feet clutching tight the Standard and dashed up the ladder after the King, leaving poor Charlemagne to his fate.

How William ever reached the top of that ladder he never knew. He had never had a good head for heights and quite apart from the shaking and quivering caused by the weight of two knights in full armour hurrying up it as quickly as they could, there was a hail of stones, arrows, and humble but familiar pieces of crockery hurled down by the defenders above.

Somehow, however, he managed to survive and in what seemed a remarkably short space of time, the Christian watchers below sent up cheer upon cheer. There, silhouetted against the bright blue sky on the very highest section of the walls were visible the stalwart figure of the Lionheart waving his sword in triumph alongside the Royal Standard firmly planted on the battlements and guarded by Sir William de Littlehampton. While round their feet there gambolled, barking triumphantly, a tailless wolf-hound whose unattractive appearance was for once redeemed by a justified self-assurance.

* * * * *



THE sun was blazing from a cloudless sky and had it not been for a slight sea-breeze, just sufficient to fill the sails of the *Santa Caterina Lachrymosa*, the heat would have been intolerable. Stretched out in the shadow of the poop lay William, fanned by the faithful Hercule, eating dates and observing with interest a flying fish that was careering from wave to wave alongside the ship.

Some six weeks had passed since the fall of Acre and with the advance of summer the campaigning season had drawn to a close. Many of the Crusaders felt that although Jerusalem remained in the hands of the Infidel enough had been accomplished to justify

their departure. This feeling was shared by William who, moreover, considered that to stay longer would be to tempt Providence, for luck such as his could not surely continue indefinitely. On learning therefore that a large, fast ship was leaving shortly from Tyre for Marseilles, he had booked a passage to the latter port with the intention of continuing his journey overland to the Channel.

They had now been some three days at sea and although the coast of Syria lay far behind they had remained in sight of numerous small islands, one of which at this moment lay a couple of leagues to starboard. William was just enquiring of Hercule what land it was when there came from the look-out the familiar cry, 'A sail, a sail!'

The reaction produced by this warning was very different from that which had occurred on board the *St. Caradoc*; the *Santa Caterina Lachrymosa* was a far larger vessel, heavily armed, and thanks to her two banks of oars manned by well-whipped galley-slaves, had a great turn of speed, and those who bothered to mount the poop to gaze in the direction indicated by the look-out, did so from idle curiosity rather than apprehension. The sail in question turned out to be a small galley which sheered off as soon as she had sighted their own ship, and William, after a casual glance, returned to his contemplation of the flying fish.

At first the elusive creature seemed completely to have disappeared, but at length William discerned a gleam in the waves some few yards to port. What was his astonishment to realise as he looked closer that this was not his old acquaintance but a glass bottle! His curiosity fully aroused by so unusual a sight (glass bottles were not then the commonplace articles they are today), he turned to Charlemagne who lay panting by his side, saying 'Go on then, fetch it boy!' Charlemagne, by no means loath to take a dip and eager to show off his prowess in the water, cleared the bulwark at one bound, swam rapidly towards the bottle, gripped it firmly between his teeth and with some difficulty and a little assistance from a kindly sailor with a boathook, regained the deck.

On examining the bottle, which Charlemagne had laid obediently at his feet, William was interested to observe that it contained a small roll of parchment which, on extraction, proved to be covered in writing that he assumed to be Greek. Fortunately Hercule had been at one time in the Byzantine service and was well acquainted with the Greek tongue. Accordingly on his master's bidding he translated the document as follows.

If you be Christians in that great vessel, take pity, I beg you, on a young maiden of gentle birth, cruelly kidnapped from her native land, who is even now being carried away by Infidel pirates to slavery and a fate worse than death.

DESPINA PROTOPAPADOPOULOS.

On hearing this cry of anguish William was deeply distressed. He was most anxious to reach Marseilles with all possible speed and reluctant to suffer any delay, but he was now, he remembered, a knight and he had read a quite sufficient number of romances to realise that the rescue of maidens in distress was from henceforth to be one of his principal lines of business. With as good a grace, therefore, as he could achieve, he summoned the Master, explained to him the obligation under which he rested and asked for the ship to be turned about in hot pursuit of the galley which was even now disappearing over the horizon.

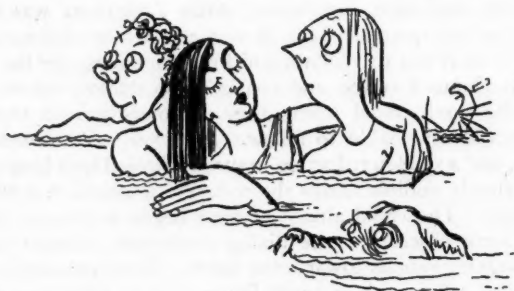
Almost at once the rhythm of the oars redoubled in speed as the whips cracked across the shoulders of the unfortunate galley-slaves. At the same time, as if Providence approved of William's unselfish decision, the breeze quickened and in a very short space it became clear that the *Santa Caterina Lachrymosa* was rapidly gaining on her quarry. This, it seemed, was as obvious aboard the galley as it was to William and his companions, for the pirates suddenly changed course and ran into the shallow waters in the lee of the small island where they obviously judged the larger vessel would be unable to follow. However, terror made them careless, and a sudden reduction in speed followed by a long rending sound, clearly audible across the water, announced that they had hit a rock. The vessel almost at once began to founder and the pirates were observed to be diving overboard in large numbers and swimming rapidly towards the shore. Then, just a split second before the galley sank, a small figure clad in white was seen to run up the deck and, with a gesture of infinite pathos, cast herself into the waves from that side of the ship opposite the *Santa Caterina Lachrymosa*.

Once more William found himself in an intolerable dilemma. Their ship, it was obvious, could not safely get more closely inshore, there was no dinghy and a brief enquiry made it clear that of the ship's company only William and Leofric could swim. Much as he disliked that form of exercise William saw clearly that he would have to plunge in, for to allow Leofric to get away with the credit alone would be unthinkable. Accordingly, drawing some comfort from the reflection that the Mediterranean was

unlikely to prove so cold as the moat of Courantsdair, he jumped briskly over the side, calling upon Leofric to follow.

William's efforts were fully rewarded for, by dint of quite extraordinary exertions, he reached the maiden's side just as she was going down for the third time, and with the assistance of Leofric, and despite the well-meaning, but on the whole ineffective, efforts of Charlemagne to be of use, succeeded in bringing her to the *Santa Caterina Lachrymosa*.

After the whole party had dried in the sun the unfortunate maiden who had been afforded such comforts as the ship could provide, was prevailed upon through the medium of Hercule to tell her story. She was, it appeared, the only daughter of Constantine Protopappadopoulos, Lord of the island of Kolynos. She had, but two days previously, been playing blindman's-buff with her girl friends on the seashore close to her home, when a band of corsairs suddenly sprang out from behind a rock. She, unfortunately, had been 'he,' and assuming the screams of her companions, who had fled on the first sight of the intruders, to be all part of the game, had run blindfold into the arms of her captors.



Deeply moved by this touching recital, as were all the ship's company, William saw clearly that there was nothing for it but to turn aside to Kolynos, which fortunately the Master assured him was but a day's sail to starboard, and restore the unfortunate girl to the arms of her father.

Early next morning a cry from aloft informed William that they were in sight of the island and natural curiosity to see the home of the beautiful Despina prompted him to go at once to the poop. The view which met his eyes was quite unexpectedly rewarding; there rose up from the sea, about two leagues ahead,

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a great mountain whose sides seemed to drop almost perpendicularly to the water's edge. To the east, however, there jutted out a short arm of comparatively flat land, fringed on one side with a long strip of sandy beach backed by palms, caribs, figs and olives, and on the other by numerous buildings in a most refined style of architecture facing a considerable harbour enclosed by a fortified mole of well-constructed masonry. On the very top of the mountain there appeared a great castle of apparently miraculous construction, connected with the town below by a long flight of steps curling and backing up the mountain-side, protected at intervals by castellated gateways and formidable curtain-walls.

However, the air of gaiety and charm which the town possessed when seen from a distance proved on closer view to be largely illusory. All the shops along the sea-front were shut, the ships in the harbour had their flags at half-mast, and from the domed church behind the houses came the sound of gloomy chanting. Despite the bright colour of many of the buildings, the sparkling waters of the harbour and the brilliant sunlight in which the whole scene was bathed, an indescribable air of depression hung about the entire place.

At first the waterside appeared to be completely deserted but at length, just after they had lowered the gangplank, a solitary customs official, of infinitely depressed appearance, sauntered gloomily towards them and as William, courteously giving his arm to Miss Protopappadopoulos, appeared at the side, asked in hollow tones to see their passports.

As William was quite unacquainted with the Greek tongue it was his fair companion who replied and at the sound of her voice the official condescended to raise his eyes from the ground for the first time. Instantly his face was transfigured, his eyes almost popped from their sockets, a radiant but incredulous smile lightened his countenance and falling on his knees he covered Despina's hands with kisses. Almost at once further figures, attracted by the sounds of the customs official's rejoicing, appeared from the neighbouring houses, and as the news of their lady's return spread like wildfire through the town the whole atmosphere completely changed. Shutters were taken down from the shops, the sound of chanting stopped abruptly to be succeeded by the ringing of church bells, and from every street and alley radiant Greeks poured onto the quayside to swell the vast crowd by which William and Despina were already surrounded.

So over-excited were the loyal and affectionate townspeople that



there is no saying when William and Despina would have been disentangled had they been left to their own devices, but it was not long before the crowd fell back to make way for a distinguished group of newcomers rapidly approaching down the hill from the direction of the Castle. At the head of the little procession was a nobleman of refined and venerable appearance, clad in a style far richer than that affected by the upper classes of society in England. William at once assumed him to be the Lord of Kolynos—an assumption that was almost immediately confirmed by the old man's enfolding Despina in his arms while the tears coursed down both their cheeks. After some minutes during which relief and joy bereft both parent and child of speech, Despina, talking at great speed, explained to her father the circumstances of her rescue and led him up to the slightly embarrassed William. In excellent French, of which the fluency was only slightly impaired by strong emotion, the good old man expressed at length his gratitude, admiration and wonder, and finally concluded a speech, the length of which was agreeably enlivened by a wealth of gesture, by insisting that William and his page should immediately accompany him to his castle while the rest of the ship's company were to be entertained at the public charge by the delighted citizens.

The palace of the Lord of Kolynos, for castle was too austere a term to describe so magnificent a dwelling, quite overwhelmed William by the convenience of its arrangements and the luxury of its furnishing. The walls were adorned with exquisite views of noble buildings, and elegantly designed landscapes all carried

out in the most beautiful mosaic. In one room Adam and Eve were seen in the Garden of Eden surrounded by every known species of flower and shrub, and beautifully rendered animals of an unquestionable docility. In another the great Achilles was riding at speed round the walls of Troy, dragging behind him the body of Hector, and observed with deep emotion by Priam and Helen clearly distinguishable on the battlements above. The floors of the innumerable apartments were all inlaid with marble and covered, in some cases, by magnificent carpets of oriental workmanship; and through open doorways one caught sight of cool loggias laid out with potted shrubs and refreshed by ingeniously designed fountains. It was all, William felt, very unlike Courantsdair.

Such were the comforts and wonders of Kolynos that William, despite his anxiety to get home as quickly as possible, could hardly bear to put an end to his stay beneath Constantine Protopappadopoulos' hospitable roof. In particular he acquired a great fondness for Turkish baths, with which the castle was bountifully supplied, and of which he had previously never so much as heard. However, at the end of a week, despite the sincere and voluble protests of both Despina and her father, he firmly announced that the wind being favourable he must depart at sunrise the next day. When the Lord of Kolynos saw that nothing he could say would shake the determination of his guest, he reluctantly consented to his departure, announcing at the same time that there would take place the same night a farewell banquet which all the ship's company, together with the most distinguished residents of the island, were without fail to attend.

To catalogue the innumerable dishes which were set before William, or to describe their exquisite flavour, or the refined manner of their preparation is a task beyond my powers. I can only tell you that the great feast in El-Babooni's stronghold seemed in retrospect to have been little better than a provincial beanfeast, and in comparison with the elegance and subtlety of this menu to have been characterised solely by an ostentatious and vulgar profusion. However, even the most ingenious of repasts must some time come to an end, and at length, when the last fruits had been removed, the glasses finally recharged, the Lord of Kolynos rose to take leave of his guest in a speech which William expected to be long, but little guessed would have so dramatic a close.

'Loyal subjects and distinguished guests,' said Constantine Protopappadopoulos, 'we are met together this evening to bid farewell to one who by his valour and resource has laid the whole island, and particularly its ruler, under an obligation which can

never properly be discharged. Of the circumstances and occasion of his coming among us you are all fully aware, and there is no need therefore for me to enlarge upon them, even had I the fluency and descriptive powers properly to do so.'

Nevertheless for the next twenty minutes the good old man proceeded to describe in detail every aspect of his daughter's plight and her miraculous delivery, adding several exciting incidents such as an underwater fight with the leader of the pirates and a breathless pursuit by man-eating sharks, of which William, to tell the truth, had very little clear recollection.

'And now, my friends,' continued their host, 'how best may we recompense this heroic and incomparable young man? I confess I have spent long and sleepless nights in debating just this question and only now have I found an answer which, however painful it may be to me personally, I am convinced provides the only solution.'

At this point in the speech there came into the host's voice a note of deep emotion, and he paused to cast a glance of inexpressible tenderness towards his only child.

'Old as I am, my eyesight is still good, and I have not failed to notice this last few days the warmth and affection in the glances which my beloved daughter has freely bestowed upon our young visitor. He for his part, with that gentlemanly reserve which so distinguishes the gallant race from which he springs, has done his best to conceal his true feelings beneath a mask of stoical indifference. But I was not deceived! My daughter is, as you well know, the light of my life and the apple of my eye, but nevertheless deeply and long as I shall miss her—and here I think I am speaking not only for myself but for all loyal Kolynotes—her happiness must always be my first consideration.

'Take her, dear boy, take her,' he cried, turning to William with the tears coursing down his cheeks, 'and may she ever prove as loyal a wife as she has been dutiful a daughter.'

Poor William was too embarrassed to speak and was, moreover, very much afraid that he was going to have hiccups. What on earth would his mother say if he were to come back with a foreign bride? Whatever was he going to do about Gertrude? And then, as the memory of Gertrude's weather-beaten features and huntin' voice came to him afresh and as he looked across the table at Despina, whose beauty had indeed made a deep, if unconscious, impression, his mind was suddenly made up. Rising to his feet he crossed the hall and took both the lovely heiress' hands in his own.

* * * * *

The sun was low above the western downs and, although it still wanted two days till the harvest was in, there was already a feeling of approaching autumn in the air. A faint mist was gathering in the meadows below the castle, mingling with the wood smoke rising from the village hidden from sight in the valley. In the bailey, across which the shadow of the great keep was slowly extending, a large hay-wain was being unloaded alongside the stables, the castle cat was stretching in that corner of the gatehouse which still retained the sun, and a row of ducklings went quacking in the wake of the gatehouse-keeper's daughter carrying a pot of mash to the pigsty. High above this peaceful scene in a sheltered corner of the battlements, the Dame de Courantsdair was watering her potted plants.

Nearly a year had gone by since William's departure for the Crusade and during all that time no word had reached Courantsdair. Local rumour had it that Sir Willibald de Wandsworth had been slain, but no details of his tragic end had as yet come to the ears of his neighbours. The Dame, although she would have died rather than admit it, was growing nervous, and her youngest daughter Gwendolen, William's favourite sister, made no effort to conceal her anxiety and was even now on the topmost turret of the keep scanning the road to the sea. This look-out she had recently made her daily charge at this hour of the evening, but was today observing every detail of the distant scene with a more than usual absorption. For Abbot Slapjack, who had arrived late at the castle the previous evening, had announced the presence of a large vessel from foreign parts lying out in the roads and the fond girl hoped against hope that some messenger might be aboard bringing tidings of her beloved brother. The Abbot himself, not a sentimental type, attached little importance to his own news, and was comfortably installed in the Dame's solar composing his sermon for the forthcoming Harvest Festival.

The Dame had just emptied her watering-can and was preparing to go indoors when a shrill scream from aloft drew her attention to her daughter who was pointing with wild excitement towards the coast road. Almost despite herself the formidable matron cast a glance in the same direction, and as she did so the sharp reprimand which Gwendolen was about to receive on the rudeness of 'pointing,' died on her lips.

Coming over the crest of the hill, just before where the road sank once more from sight to the village below, was an impressive procession.

First came a gigantic negro, superbly mounted, carrying a large

banner with an unfamiliar device, closely followed by a snub-nosed youth whom Gwendolen, whose eyesight was sharper than her mother's, was hysterically certain was Leofric. Then came a closed litter borne on the backs of two mules alongside which rode a handsome youth on a grey mare whom the Dame for some time remained unconvinced was really her son, and at whose heels there gambolled a large, tailless hound of familiar ugliness. Behind were visible two men-at-arms and a long string of servants and pack animals.

By the time the tail of the procession had passed over the brow of the hill, the negro and Leofric were already clattering over



the drawbridge into the outer bailey, and a sound of cheering from the village announced that the loyal villeins had recognised their returning lord. The scene which now took place in the courtyard was indescribably affecting. The gatehouse-keeper, the gatehouse-keeper's wife, the gatehouse-keeper's daughter, and the gatehouse-keeper's dog made no effort to conceal their emotion and the behaviour of Gwendolen and her six sisters was hardly more restrained. Only the Dame maintained her usual well-bred, unruffled calm, but even on that stern and dignified countenance a close observer might have noticed, if the truth were told, a faint tremor at the corner of the determined mouth, a hint of dampness in the eagle eye.

Sir William, for his part, was deeply moved by the warmth of his reception and embraced his sisters with a genuine affection and his mother with a respectful tenderness. Nevertheless those who knew him best might possibly have detected a slight shade of nervousness in his manner. This, however, completely vanished on his overhearing one of his sisters remark with an engaging innocence how sorry poor Gertrude would be to miss this home-

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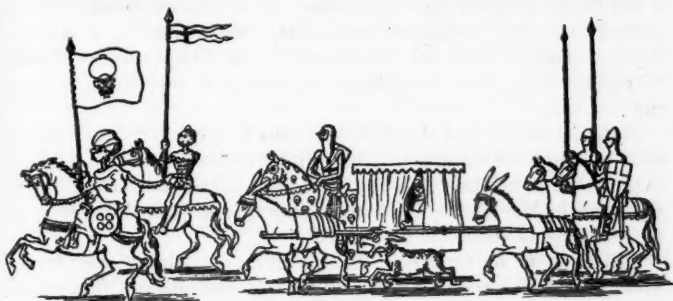
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coming, and how ill she had timed her visit to her aunt the Abbess. Thereupon his brow cleared and with a firm determined step he advanced to the closed litter, which had already aroused the keenest speculation among the bystanders, and drawing back the curtains assisted Despina to alight saying in loud, unshaken tones, as he did so, 'Mother, I wish to present to you the Lady de Littlehampton.'

The stunned silence which greeted this announcement was finally broken by the astounded Dame.

'But, but—Gertrude?' she said.

'She can go into a nunnery,' Sir William easily replied, adding a little unkindly, 'she was everlastingly saying she felt she had a call to the religious life. And now,' he continued quickly before anyone had time to discuss the point, 'we will go in and tidy. Then in half an hour all will repair to the Chapel where Abbot Slapjack, whom I am delighted to see here today, will celebrate our nuptials.'

Noticing the look of consternation which came over his mother's face at this announcement, Sir William made haste to explain that as the previous ceremony had been conducted according to the rites of the Greek Orthodox Church, he had thought it as well to repeat them on his return.

'After that,' he went on, 'there will be a wedding feast in the great hall, which some of my people here,' indicating with a casual wave of his hand the long retinue of servants, 'will take steps to prepare while we are in the Chapel.' So saying he took Despina by the hand, whom, after she had made a deep curtsy to the Dame, he led into the Castle.

The wedding ceremony, conducted by the Abbot with all his usual mastery was simple but touching. The bride, in an exquisite white gown of a material which was quite unfamiliar to the ladies of Courantsdair and which they were interested to learn was called silk, looked ravishing. The bridegroom, whose beautiful golden spurs attracted much attention, seemed to have acquired a new confidence and dignity. And it was generally agreed that for once no fault could be found even with the behaviour of Leofric.

It was a late hour, indeed, before anyone in the castle retired to bed that night. Over and over again William was forced to recount every detail of his journey and adventures, which he did with a becoming modesty and, all things considered, remarkable accuracy. On only one point did he in any way diverge from the strictest truth. In explaining the loss of poor Charlemagne's tail he gave the company to understand that this had occurred in the gallant action beneath the walls of Acre. At long last,

after he had described for the fifteenth time his overthrow of El-Babooni, had recounted word for word his interview with his sovereign, and had distributed the last of the costly and exotic gifts with which he had come laden from Kolyos, he rose, bidding his mother and sisters a fond good night, took Despina by the hand, and gave the signal for a general departure to bed.

* * * * *

In the years which followed the events recounted in this story the respect and affection in which Sir William and his lady were held by all who knew them steadily increased, and the castle of Courantsdair, in which its owner had effected many improvements—glass in the windows, Persian rugs on the floors, rich frescoes on the walls, and many other luxuries which, although common enough in the East, were totally unfamiliar in Sussex—became famous throughout the length and breadth of the land for its hospitality and high standard of living.

The Dame in the course of time was gathered to her fathers at the ripe age of eighty-eight; her unmarried daughters remained single, with the exception of Gwendolen who married Leofric less than a year after William's return; and Gertrude in due course succeeded her aunt as Abbess of a neighbouring convent, where her filthy temper and unnatural strictness made life intolerable for all the nuns. Charlemagne lived to a ripe old age, much respected by all the dogs of the neighbourhood and the terror of every puppy for miles around. Hercule in due course married the gatehouse-keeper's daughter, and their union was blessed with nine children, three white, three black, and three piebald.

Today more than seven centuries have passed since all these things took place and small trace now remains of any of the scenes in this tale. The ruins of the castle of Courantsdair were long conspicuous, but were finally sold by the father of the present Lord Littlehampton some years ago in order to pay death duties, and the site is now covered by the Chateau Housing Estate. Today the only remaining indication of that once formidable pile is to be found in Nos. 18 to 25 Acacia Road which, being rather hastily erected on the site of the old moat, are quite exceptionally damp in winter.

In the little village church of Currants the beautiful tomb of William and Despina, in the early Gothic style, is still preserved alongside that of Sir Dagobert although rather overshadowed by the white marble resting-place (adorned with sixteen cherubs, a life-size statue of the deceased in a full-bottom wig, and allegorical

figures of Faith, Hope and Charity) of his eighteenth-century descendant, Admiral of the Blue, Sir Marmaduke Littlehampton.¹

Of the village which William knew as a boy no trace at all remains. Nevertheless, if you look up above the door of the ancient inn (almost completely modernised in recent years) that long ago replaced *The Blue Boar* which occupied the site in the time of Sir Dagobert, you will still see, weatherbeaten, but recognisable, creaking rustily beneath the eaves, the proud sign of *The Saracen's Head*.

¹ Strangely enough, still unrecorded by Mrs. Esdaile.



THE END

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